

Independent report: AWC opinions on the animal welfare issues related to COVID-19

Animal Welfare Committee assessment of the risks to animal welfare occurring as a result of COVID-19 controls; immediate and medium to longer term impacts.

UK proposes establishment of a UK-Bangladesh Trade and Investment Dialogue

World news story

The British High Commissioner, Robert Chatterton Dickson, met with the Honourable Commerce Minister, Mr Tipu Munshi, on Thursday 3 December to formally propose the establishment of a UK-Bangladesh Trade and Investment Dialogue on behalf of the UK Government.



The British High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Robert Chatterton Dickson, met with the Honourable Commerce Minister, Mr Tipu Munshi.

As a champion of free trade, the UK wants to deepen its already strong trading relationship with Bangladesh by developing a trade partnership that builds on our shared trade and investment interests. Increasing trade between our two countries will help increase growth and aid economic development.

The Trade and Investment Dialogue would look to facilitate the deepest

possible future trading relationship between the UK and Bangladesh through a mutual commitment to identifying and addressing barriers to trade faced by our companies when exporting and helping improve the business environment.

The High Commissioner said

“The UK is looking to harness the opportunity presented by the UK’s exit from the European Union to develop a future trade partnership with Bangladesh that will increase two-way trade and bring greater prosperity to both of our countries”.

Further information

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Mike’s story

Mike is an Assistant Economist at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). He suffered a severe traumatic brain injury in a cycling accident in 2005. It set his life on a new path. Yet, he feels exceptionally lucky for all the things that helped him make the most of that path. Here he discusses disability and inclusion, in an effort to help others get an environment in which they can succeed.

Some might find it hard reading this post. They’ll see themselves as the sort to always be polite – those people would never knowingly exclude disabled people. However, in trying to be polite, they actually do exactly this. We all face challenges. Best we recognise that and just act normal around, or even empathise with, other people tackling their own challenges. Inclusion depends on it.

Like so many other people, I’ve faced my challenges. In 2005, I had a serious

cycling accident. It was just two weeks before I was due to compete in a major triathlon, the New Zealand Ironman. I sustained a severe traumatic brain injury and was lucky to survive. A long recovery ensued, including seven months in hospital and rehab. As my wife will tell you, my brain injury still causes issues like forgetfulness, over 15 years later.

From a young age, we receive training in how to be polite. It includes being taught not to stare at people who look or act different. As we get older, this training doesn't leave us – it's amazing how invisible a disabled person can feel. By the time we're adults, though, it's been extended. We get uncomfortable talking to disabled people, especially talking about their disability. This might be well-intentioned – no one wants to be rude. Yet, few things are more effective at excluding disabled people.

How come I see it this way? My brain injury is invisible – at first glance, I don't look disabled. But there were times during my recovery when my disability was very apparent. Following my accident, I had to learn how to walk again, which included spending time in a wheelchair. Few can imagine how invisible you become, sitting in one of those things. Maybe people don't want to look at you because they think it would underline you're in a wheelchair and they're not. As if you weren't aware of that already!

Likewise, many people are uncomfortable talking about someone's disability. Perhaps this is because it would remind that person they're disabled. What a silly thing! I've dealt with the effects of my brain injury every single day since I suffered it. There's no way I'm going to feel bad when someone talks to me about it. Better you ask me how it's going, and what are the latest challenges I'm overcoming. I had my accident training for a triathlon; how is triathlon for me now?

I admit, not every disabled person will be as open as me. Definitely some won't want to discuss their disability. You shouldn't worry about that, though. We humans are adept at sensing when someone doesn't want to talk about something. Use this skill. Ask that woman in the wheelchair how frustrating London tube stations are that don't have lifts. You might not know about wheelchairs on the Tube, but you might know about prams. It's so much better to empathise about someone's challenges. Admit you can't imagine the challenges she has. But then talk about the difficulties you've faced, getting around London with a pram. Empathy makes us human.

I give you a challenge for International Day for People with Disabilities, should you choose to accept it. Overcome your politeness training and force yourself to be more inclusive of disabled people. Say hi to the woman in the wheelchair; ask her how she's getting on. Maybe even empathise about the challenges she faces.

If you talk to disabled people about their challenges, you never know how you'll be helping. Perfect strangers helped enormously in my recovery. After I learnt to walk again, I slowly learnt how to swim, bike and run. Helped by encouraging, inclusive people, like some sprinters at a local athletic park, I built my fitness up. In 2010, I finally completed the Ironman triathlon I'd been aiming at before my accident. My story is just one about someone

overcoming difficult things, though. To find out others, get to know your colleagues. Showing inclusion is the right way to do that.

Mike is an active member of the DCMS Ability Network. Across departments, there are similar networks that are open for all and offer a safe environment to discuss and learn about different abilities and health conditions. Networks are for all colleagues – whether you have a disability, line manage someone with a disability, or would just like to learn from the perspectives of people with differing abilities.

As a Function, we also want to understand more about what we could be doing to address barriers and improve the experiences of analysts with a disability across government. If you'd like to talk to us, please get in touch at analysis.function@ons.gov.uk.

Extra measures to support students ahead of next summer's exams

Students sitting exams and other assessments next year will benefit from a package of exceptional measures to make them as fair as possible and manage the disruption caused by Covid-19, Education Secretary Gavin Williamson announced today (Thursday 3 December).

In recognition of the challenges faced by students this year, grades will be more generous, students will be given advance notice of some topic areas, and steps will be taken to ensure every student receives a grade, even if they miss a paper due to self-isolation or illness.

The Government has been clear that exams are the fairest way to judge a student's performance and has made keeping schools and colleges open a national priority throughout the pandemic in order to minimise disruption to education.

Building on the three-week delay to exams to free up extra teaching time announced in October, the new measures include:

- more generous grading than usual, in line with national outcomes from 2020, so students this year are not disadvantaged;
- students receiving advance notice of some topic areas covered in GCSE, AS and A levels to focus revision;
- exam aids – like formula sheets – provided in some exams giving students more confidence and reducing the amount of information they need to memorise;
- additional exams to give students a second chance to sit a paper if the main exams or assessments are missed due to illness or self-isolation;

and

- a new expert group to look at differential learning and monitor the variation in the impact of the pandemic on students across the country.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Exams are the best way of giving young people the opportunity to show what they can do which is why it's so important they take place next summer.

But this isn't business as usual. I know students are facing unprecedented disruption to their learning. That's why exams will be different next year, taking exceptional steps to ensure they are as fair as possible.

I am determined to support students, parents and teachers in these unprecedented times and hope measures like more generous grading and advance notice of some topic areas will give young people the clarity and confidence they need to achieve every success.

Today's steps follow extensive engagement with Ofqual, exam boards and senior leaders across the education sector.

The measures recognise that while teachers have gone above and beyond to support their pupils during a difficult period, some young people have had their teaching disrupted more than others and will need extra support to catch up on the curriculum and achieve their potential in exams.

In these instances, receiving advance notice of some topic areas and being given exam aids will support students and ensure they can move on to their next stage of education, training or employment with the grades they deserve.

Students taking vocational and technical qualifications will also see adaptations to ensure parity between general and vocational qualifications. Some vocational qualifications will require more varied adaptations due to the different qualification types.

The Government has also developed a series of contingency measures with Ofqual that will mean, even if students miss one or more exams due to self-isolation or sickness but have still completed a proportion of their qualification they will still receive a grade.

If a student misses all their assessments in a subject, they will have the opportunity to sit a contingency paper held shortly after the main exams. In the extreme case where a student has a legitimate reason to miss all their papers, then a validated teacher informed assessment can be used, only once all chances to sit an exam have passed.

The Government will set out further detail on this process, and on adaptations to exams, in the new year.

The Government has also announced that full, graded Ofsted inspections will not resume until the summer term.

In the interim, Ofsted will conduct supportive monitoring inspections to those schools and colleges currently judged “inadequate” and some that “require improvement”. These inspections will focus on important issues like curriculum, remote education and pupil attendance, particularly of vulnerable children.

Ofsted will also continue to have the power to inspect a school, further education or early years provider, if they have serious concerns, including about safeguarding and remote education.

John Jolly, Chief Executive, Parentkind, said:

We welcome the clarity that the Department is providing for parents of young people preparing to take their exams in summer 2021. Parents have told us that the uncertainty over arrangements for exams has been a source of concern and anxiety for both them and their children.

Parents and young people will be relieved to have a clearer sense of what the arrangements are and how this will ensure that individual circumstances are taken into account. At Parentkind we will continue to raise parents’ questions about the arrangements going forward.

Leora Cruddas, Chief Executive, Confederation of School Trusts, said:

Given the disruption to teaching last year, as well as the likelihood of ongoing disruption this year, it is increasingly likely that large numbers of students will not be able to cover all the content needed for examinations, as they would in a normal year.

These steps help students feel confident about their exams as an important step towards making the system as fair as possible.

Test and exam results will not be included in performance tables this year, and instead will be replaced by attendance information, and student destinations and the subjects taken at key stage 4 and 5.

These changes take account of the challenges posed by the pandemic but will ensure parents still have access to vital information about their local school.

The Government has also reviewed remote education guidance and published updated expectations to provide further clarity for schools, colleges, parents and pupils. Primary schools are expected to provide a minimum of

three hours a day on average of remote education, with secondary schools expected to provide at least four hours' worth.

Similar expectations will apply for colleges and other further education providers which take into account the sector's role in delivering both academic and technical provision.

For primary assessments, key stage 1 tests in English reading and mathematics, and the English grammar, punctuation and spelling tests at key stage 1 and 2 will be removed for one year, in recognition of the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Schools can take a flexible approach to the administration of the key stage 2 tests and phonics screening check, by extending the original timetable by a week, until 26 May and 25 June, respectively.

Although primary performance data will not be published, teacher assessment in English reading, writing and mathematics at key stage 1, and all other assessments at key stage 2, will remain. These measures will help to understand pupils' lost time in education and support those that need it most, providing vital information to parents and assisting with pupils' transition to secondary schools.

Martyn Oliver, Chief Executive of Outwood Grange Academy Trust, said:

As a Trust which supports 39 schools in the North of England, of which 35 are located within a Tier 3 region since the national restrictions ended, our focus has been and remains on how children who have faced unprecedented disruption will be treated fairly.

By running exams with these measures and committing to looking at the differential loss of learning, our children and their parents can feel assured work to level-up is serious.

Ian Pryce, Chief Executive of Bedford College, said:

The Department and Ofqual have consulted genuinely, widely and seriously and I hope this will reassure students, parents and teachers.

Great care is being taken to ensure students will have an opportunity to sit their exams; will have longer to prepare, and will be given information and options to help them achieve even where they have seen a reduction in face-to-face teaching.

Maintaining overall standards roughly at last year's level recognises the variability of the experience of different students. It is the appropriate decision and will help students achieve a good outcome.

Lesley Powell CBE, Chief Executive of North East Learning Trust:

The measures put in place offer a sensible and pragmatic route through the wake of COVID disruption and offer staff and students a clear target for next year.

The approach covers a range of contingencies that will hopefully instill confidence in the exam process and reduce stress for everyone involved. Exams are an important aspect of children's educational experience, and indeed of growing up; allowing these to continue, in as fair a way as possible, I strongly believe is the right thing to do.

Government consults on ending live animal exports for slaughter

Plans to ban the export of live animals for slaughter and fattening have been unveiled by the Environment Secretary today (3 December), in the start of a renewed push by government to strengthen the UK's position as a world leader on animal welfare.

These proposals form part of an eight-week consultation, launched today in England and Wales, seeking views on how to better protect animal welfare during transport.

Live animals commonly have to endure excessively long journeys during exports, causing distress and injury. Previously, EU rules prevented any changes to these journeys, but leaving the EU has enabled the UK Government to pursue these plans which would prevent unnecessary suffering of animals during transport and see us become the first country in Europe to end this practice.

The government is also consulting on proposals to further improve animal welfare in transport more generally, such as:

- reduced maximum journey times
- animals being given more space and headroom during transport
- stricter rules on transporting animals in extreme temperatures
- tighter rules for transporting live animals by sea.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

We are committed to improving the welfare of animals at all stages of life. Today marks a major step forward in delivering on our

manifesto commitment to end live exports for slaughter.

Now that we have left the EU, we have an opportunity to end this unnecessary practice. We want to ensure that animals are spared stress prior to slaughter.

Around 6,400 animals were transported from the UK directly to slaughter in continental Europe in 2018, based on internal figures.

This consultation takes into account the responses to the 2018 Call for Evidence, as well as the report published by the then Farm Animal Welfare Committee (now known as the Animal Welfare Committee), which is made up of farming and veterinary experts, into the existing welfare standards for animals during transport.

Chris Sherwood, CEO for the RSPCA said:

We welcome plans to end live exports and look forward to seeing this happen as the RSPCA has campaigned on this issue for more than 50 years.

There is absolutely no reasonable justification to subject an animal to an unnecessarily stressful journey abroad simply for them to be fattened for slaughter.

Ending live exports for slaughter and further fattening would be a landmark achievement for animal welfare.

Peter Stevenson, OBE and Compassion in World Farming's Chief Policy Advisor said:

Compassion in World Farming is delighted that Defra plans to ban live exports for slaughter and fattening. We have campaigned for over 50 years against the massive suffering caused by this inhumane, archaic trade, so this unambiguous proposal is very welcome.

We urge farmers not to oppose the proposed ban but rather to recognise that this is an important part of moving forward to a high welfare future.

This announcement marks the start of renewed efforts from government to raise standards on animal welfare even further now we are outside the EU, including taking steps to ban primates as pets and crack down on the illegal smuggling of dogs and puppies, with further proposals to improve standards and eradicate cruel practices expected to be set out in the coming months.

[The consultation can be accessed here.](#)

- Animal welfare is a fully devolved matter. The UK Government is working closely with the Welsh Government on this consultation. We will also discuss the results of this consultation with the Scottish Government with the aim of having similar rules apply across Great Britain on improving the protection for animals in transport. Northern Ireland will continue to follow EU legislation on animal welfare in transport for as long as the Northern Ireland Protocol is in place.
- The measure on live exports will not impact on poultry exports or exports for breeding purposes.
- We have been unable to pursue this policy in the past because of the EU trading rules on the movement of animals. Leaving the EU has enabled us to pursue this policy on ending live exports for slaughter and fattening.