

## [News story: All offices closed](#)

*Updated:* Updated to include press contact details.

Due to the bad weather, all our offices are closed on Thursday 1 March and Friday 2 March 2018.

All our online services are available to [search](#) and [file your documents](#).

You won't be able to use any 'same day' services during this time.

The contact centre is closed, and we won't be able to answer any phone calls or emails.

All press queries must be sent to [press@companieshouse.gov.uk](mailto:press@companieshouse.gov.uk).

Sorry for the inconvenience.

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## [News story: Christine Middlemiss begins as UK Chief Veterinary Officer](#)

Christine Middlemiss [has today](#) taken up post as UK Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) taking over from Nigel Gibbens who has stepped down after 10 successful years in the role.

[Watch Christine's message on her first day at Defra](#)

Christine has a wealth of experience and joins Defra after serving as the CVO for New South Wales, Australia. She took up that role in August 2016 and during her tenure she led major improvements to biosecurity across many farming sectors including implementation of new outcome focused and risk based biosecurity legislation; online animal certification processes and improving evidence and risk based disease control approaches.

She comes from a farming family in the south of Scotland, with a background in beef cattle and sheep. Prior to moving to Australia Christine was an experienced veterinarian who worked for a number of years in private practice in Scotland and the north of England with specific interest in research, meat processing and livestock genetics. She then joined the Animal Health agency (now part of the Animal and Plant Health Agency) in 2008 as a Divisional Veterinary Manager in Scotland. She also led Defra's Animal Traceability and Public Health policy team detecting and responding to new and emerging diseases such as Schmallenberg and Porcine Epidemic Diarrhoea.

She re-joins the department at a time when animal welfare is a top priority for the Government, demonstrated by a number of recent announcements including legislation making CCTV cameras mandatory in slaughterhouses, the call for evidence on a ban on third party puppy sales and the draft animal welfare bill. The Government is also committed to the very highest standards on animal welfare. As the prime Minister has set out, we will make the United Kingdom a world leader in the care and protection of animals as we leave the EU.

Speaking about her appointment, Christine Middlemiss said:

I am delighted to have been appointed. It is a privilege to take over from Nigel and lead my veterinary colleagues to support our farming and food industry on the UK reputation for high health and welfare of our animals.

I am very much looking forward to working again with the team at Defra, its agencies, the devolved administrations and all the individuals and groups who will contribute to meet future challenges.

Our Secretary of State has confirmed he wants to cement the UK's place as a world-leader on animal health and welfare as the UK leaves the European Union, and I'm delighted to have an opportunity to play a part in that.

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## **[News story: Learner drivers on motorways from 4 June 2018](#)**

*Updated:* Added the date (Monday 4 June 2018) that the law will change, advice about driving near learner drivers on the motorway, and added a Welsh translation of the news story.

From Monday 4 June 2018, learner drivers will be able to take driving lessons on motorways in England, Scotland and Wales.

This will help to make sure more drivers know how to use motorways safely.

At the moment, you can only have motorway lessons after you've passed your driving test. Some newly-qualified drivers take lessons through the voluntary [Pass Plus](#) scheme.

## How the change will work

Learner drivers will need to be:

- accompanied by an approved driving instructor
- driving a car fitted with dual controls

Any motorways lessons will be voluntary. It will be up to the driving instructor to decide when the learner driver is competent enough for them.

Until the law changes, it's still illegal for a learner driver to drive on a motorway.

The change only applies to learner drivers of cars. Learner motorcyclists won't be allowed on motorways.

Trainee driving instructors won't be allowed to take learner drivers on the motorway.

Motorway driving isn't being introduced to the driving test as part of this change.

## Making sure road users are ready for the change

The change is being well-publicised so that:

- driving instructors and learner drivers are prepared
- other road users know what to expect

[The Highway Code rules on motorways](#) will be updated.

## Driving near learner drivers on the motorway

As with any vehicle on the motorway, keep a safe distance from a learner driver in front of you. Increase the gap on wet or icy roads, or in fog.

You should always be patient with learner drivers. They may not be so skilful at anticipating and responding to events.

## Driving instructor vehicles and training

Driving instructors can decide if they want to use a driving school rooftop box during motorway lessons, based on its instructions.

The car will need to [display L plates](#) on the front and rear if the rooftop box is removed.



It will be up to the instructor whether or not they keep their driving school rooftop box on the car.

## **Guidance for driving instructors**

[Learning materials](#) and the [syllabus for learning to drive a car](#) are being updated to include motorway lessons.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency won't give driving instructors extra training on providing motorway lessons.

The driving instructor's National Associations Strategic Partnership has produced best practice guidance to help instructors.

[Download 'Motorway tuition guidelines' \(PDF. 116KB\)](#)

## **Preparing drivers for a lifetime of safe driving**

The changes are being made to allow learner drivers to:

- get broader driving experience before taking their driving test
- get training on how to join and leave the motorway, overtake and use lanes correctly
- practise driving at higher speeds
- understand motorway specific traffic signs
- understand what to do if a vehicle breaks down on a motorway
- improve their confidence to drive on the motorway unsupervised after

passing their driving test

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## [News story: New 'Cumbria Exchange' portal is launched](#)

Cumbria Exchange will build on the strong community spirit that exists in the area, by helping businesses and the community find each other for mutual benefit.

It will function as an online matching service, by quickly connecting those who need help, to those who can provide it.

It works on a simple 'offers and needs' basis.

Councillor David Moore, Chair of the Copeland Community Fund said;

This is an exciting collaboration that the community and businesses have been waiting for.

The sense of community spirit in Cumbria is phenomenal, but alone this isn't enough, we needed a place that people can go to understand what help is needed, and what support is available.

Cumbria Exchange is a simple forum that makes this process easier.

We didn't want to wait for a flood or crisis, this is something that can get maximum benefit for the community at all times.

For businesses, it tells them what the community really needs, and for community organisations it give them a place they can go to ask for help, whether that be advice, manpower or equipment.

It will only succeed if people use it, so I would urge community groups and businesses to submit your requests and offers, however big or small.

Community organisations simply submit a 'support wanted' request if they need help, however big or small.

Businesses can post in the 'support offered' area if they have specific skills, expertise or equipment that can be of benefit to the community.

Cumbria Exchange is the result of a group of organisations and community groups identifying a need for a more coordinated approach to creating social and economic impact.

It was developed as collaboration between the Copeland Community Fund, Cumbria Community Foundation, Low Level Waste Repository Ltd, the Nuclear Community Network (Sellafield Ltd and supply chain), Britain's Energy Coast, Business in the Community and United Utilities.

It is a result of numerous community groups and local businesses identifying the need for a more coordinated way of supporting each other.

Anyone can submit a request or offer by going to [Cumbria Exchange](#).

For support please contact by Telephone: 01946 598352 or Email: [info@cumbriaexchange.co.uk](mailto:info@cumbriaexchange.co.uk)

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## **News story: Call for evidence: Home Office treatment of vulnerable adults.**

The ICIBI has started an inspection of how effectively, efficiently and consistently the Home Office's Borders, Immigration and Citizenship System (BICS) treats vulnerable adults when it encounters them.

The evidence gathering process for this inspection has started and the inspectorate's established stakeholders will shortly be asked for their input. However, the Independent Chief Inspector is keen to receive written evidence from anyone with relevant knowledge, expertise or first-hand experience of this subject, and in particular any recent examples of good or poor practice.

The inspection will examine Home Office BICS policies, guidance, training and practice in relation to vulnerable adults encountered at the border and in the UK, including where this involves other agencies. It will focus on face-to-face encounters, but will also consider the extent to which paper-based BICS processes are capable of capturing and responding to evidence of vulnerability.

The inspection will not look at vulnerable adults in immigration detention, as this is the subject of a separate review by Stephen Shaw (with whom the inspectorate is in dialogue). Nor will it look in detail at asylum casework, Potential Victims of Modern Slavery (PVoMS), the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, or the provision of asylum accommodation, as each of these topics has been covered in inspections that have either been published recently or are due to be published in the next few months.

Please email the Chief Inspector:  
[chiefinspector@icinspector.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:chiefinspector@icinspector.gsi.gov.uk)

or write to:

ICIBI

5th Floor

Globe House

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London SW1V 1PN

The deadline for submissions is 23 March 2018.