

Press release: Back the fight against puppy smugglers and backstreet breeders, says animal welfare Minister

People planning to add a four-legged friend to the family this Christmas need to be wary of unscrupulous breeders and sellers, animal welfare Minister Lord Gardiner has warned today.

The UK is a nation of animal lovers, and each year thousands of us consider welcoming a pet into the family at Christmas time to add to the UK's 8.5 million pet dogs and 7.4 million cats. However, puppy smugglers and unlicensed sellers are ready to take advantage of the high demand by illegally importing them into the country, neglecting their health and welfare and not properly vaccinating them – leading to steep vets' bills and heartbreak for buyers when the puppies fall ill or in some cases, sadly die.

Consequently, it's now more important than ever that buyers are armed with the knowledge they need to buy responsibly and avoid inadvertently fuelling the illegal puppy smuggling trade.

Minister for animal welfare, Lord Gardiner, said:

We all know that a dog is for life, not just for Christmas. But that life could be cruelly cut short if they haven't been properly looked after by the breeder, bringing heartbreak to the family.

We are a nation of animal lovers and buyers can do their bit to avoid the dishonest sellers by never buying a puppy younger than 8 weeks old, seeing the puppy interact with its mother and checking on its health history.

The government announced earlier this year that some of the [Pet Advertising Advisory Group's minimum standards](#) will become mandatory for online sellers as part of a [swathe of reforms to the animal licensing system](#). The reforms will make it illegal to sell puppies younger than eight weeks and require anyone breeding and selling three or more litters a year to apply for a formal licence. Anyone trading commercially in pets online will need to be properly licensed.

The plans will be laid in Parliament in the new year and will empower local authorities to take tough action on 'backstreet breeders' and help ensure the pets we buy are healthy, happy and from reputable sellers.

Minister for animal welfare Lord Gardiner recently hosted a roundtable with a number of animal charities and websites including Gumtree, Preloved and Vivastreet to discuss the progress made so far. The Minister has since written to those invited to the roundtable to praise their work in helping to

stop illegal sellers and encouraging further action.

Lord Gardiner has also set out five simple tips to help anyone thinking of committing to a new pet to choose the right animal:

- Always consider a rescue dog in the first instance.
- If you are buying a puppy, only buy from reputable breeders and sellers – and make sure they're licensed if buying from a business rather than private seller.
- Never buy a puppy that's younger than 8 weeks old.
- Check the puppy's health history – check vaccinations, make sure it's microchipped, and consider asking the seller to complete the ['Puppy Contract'](#).
- See the puppy interact with its mother.

If something still doesn't feel right, don't be afraid to walk away and look elsewhere. You should also report suspect breeders and sellers to your local council or Trading Standards.

Paula Boyden, Dogs Trust Veterinary Director and Chair of PAAG said:

The ease and popularity of the internet means that the impulse buying of pets has increasingly become an appealing option for many prospective buyers. However, the lure of a quick sale also attracts many unscrupulous breeders and dealers to websites.

We urge buyers to be cautious when looking to buy an animal via an online advert and if they have any concerns, walk away and report the seller to Trading Standards.

John Fishwick, President of the British Veterinary Association, said:

Vets see first-hand the tragic consequences that can result from poorly bred and illegally imported puppies. We've heard awful stories of people buying puppies only for their puppy to be dead 24 hours later because of the way it was bred and cared for in its early days.

Owning a dog is a life-changing commitment and we'd advise anyone thinking about getting a dog to first speak to their local vet about the right breed for them and then use the free online Puppy Contract to ensure they get a happy, healthy and well-socialised puppy.

A dog should never be bought 'for Christmas' as it can be a stressful time of year for pets, with lots going on, so we'd recommend waiting until the new year to welcome a new dog into your home.

This announcement comes as the UK embarks on a package of reforms to make sure we are a leader in animal welfare once we leave the EU. From bringing in tougher prison sentences for those who abuse animals to mandatory CCTV in slaughterhouses, the UK is leading the way with some of the highest animal welfare standards in the world.

1. More [information on the Pet Advertising Advisory Group](#), including a list of websites which are currently meeting their minimum standards.
2. Further [information on the RSPCA's Puppy Contract](#)

[News story: Views sought on early years education for disadvantaged children](#)

Thousands more disadvantaged two-year-olds will become eligible to receive the government's free 15 hour childcare entitlement, under new proposals outlined today.

In light of the national roll out of Universal Credit, the Department for Education has launched a [consultation](#) today (Monday 4 December) asking for views on how the government should continue to offer early years education to the families who should be receiving the 15 hours of free childcare for two-year-olds from disadvantaged families.

The government wants to expand the offer to ensure that around 8,000 more disadvantaged children will benefit from high quality early education, once Universal Credit is fully rolled out.

As of January 2017 around 160,000 two-year-olds are already taking up the free offer. Under the proposals, all children who are taking up the offer will continue to have access, and the entitlement will be targeted to ensure it reaches those most in need in the future, seeing thousands more families

benefit as a result.

Minister for Children and Families Robert Goodwill said:

Expanding access to high-quality early education is essential if we are to give every child the best start in life, which is why we are investing a record amount in childcare – £6 billion by 2020.

Our proposals not only ensure that no two-year-old who is already benefitting from the free 15 hour offer loses it, but will give thousands more the chance to benefit, supporting their early development.

This is an important issue and it is important that we get this right. We want to hear from families, early years' professionals and other experts throughout this consultation so we can identify those children who need our support most.

The introduction of Universal Credit lies at the heart of the government's commitment to help people improve their lives and raise their incomes. This consultation will make sure the two-year-old entitlement continues to be targeted where it is needed most.

This is part of the government's total childcare offer which is backed by a record investment of around £6 billion per year by 2020. The proposals outlined in the consultation include introducing a net earnings income threshold of £15,400 per year for those in receipt of Universal Credit – typically equivalent to between £24,000 and £32,000 in total household income.

No child will lose access to the free hours once they are already in receipt of the offer, regardless of the introduction of the new earnings threshold. We are not proposing any other changes to the two-year-old eligibility criteria.

Universal Credit is replacing a number of qualifying benefits for the two-year-old entitlement, including Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit and Income Support.

[News story: Lord Duncan visits The HALO Kilmarnock](#)

Lord Duncan today [4 December] saw work getting underway on the £65 million urban regeneration project, which is supported by £3.5 million of UK Government funding.

The funding will support a new Enterprise & Innovation Centre to foster the next generation of entrepreneurs, with strong focus on innovation, digital skills, and cyber security.

The HALO Kilmarnock, located on the site of the former Johnnie Walker bottling plant, is a multi-faceted brownfield regeneration scheme which will create an innovative, inspirational and imaginative urban park with a dynamic commercial, educational, cultural, leisure and lifestyle quarter. Its low carbon, renewable deep geothermal district heating network will address fuel costs on the site and have the capability of being extended to service other areas of the community – a first for the UK. The development will also include a light manufacturing facility and key worker private rental accommodation.

Lord Duncan said:

Supported by a £3.5 million UK Government investment, The HALO Kilmarnock is an ambitious, important development that will create jobs, grow the economy and drive innovation. The project will attract international companies to locate in the town, benefiting from the excellent transport links and a local, well-trained workforce. The HALO Kilmarnock represents marks a fresh start for Kilmarnock and Ayrshire and I hope that the project is a catalyst for further regeneration in Scotland and beyond.

Marie Macklin, founder and director of The HALO Kilmarnock, said:

The HALO will play an important role in the UK Government's UK Industrial Strategy, to which we contributed at its consultation stage. The economic benefits of this community led development will be felt not just in Kilmarnock and East Ayrshire, but across the whole of Scotland and driving down into the Northern Powerhouse, harnessing the power of the 4th Industrial Revolution – the digital revolution.

We welcome the UK Government's support for The HALO Kilmarnock which is a major infrastructure project in its own right and we hope that it will prove to be a catalyst for other infrastructure projects, such as the improved road and rail links that will connect it with the rest of the UK.

News story: New bullet-proof material unveiled as Defence Minister visits MOD's research hub

On her visit to the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), she spoke with scientists who are creating a lighter, more flexible body armour for soldiers which uses a unique synthetically adjusted ceramic material that still stops bullets.

Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin said:

We've spent millions on innovation this year, developing technologies like a new way to uncover insurgents' fingerprints to mini-drones that investigate chemical hazards. The goal is always to help our Armed Forces defend the UK, and this next generation of armour will make our troops even more alert and effective on the battlefield.

Research has indicated soldiers wearing ceramic armour could see a 35 per cent weight reduction, which could make them faster and more comfortable in a warzone, whilst maintaining a high level of protection.

The synthetic biology for the armour project has been running for four years and Dstl are now ready to put samples through hardness testing. They also confirmed that a scale-up process is underway to produce samples that can be used for live-fire testing.

£6 million has been invested in synthetic biology to date for novel materials research, reaching out to academia and industry via a series of competitions. In some cases these competitions have been run jointly with the Research Councils, in others they have been run independently using MOD organisations, such as the Defence Accelerator.

The MOD has committed 1.2% of the rising £36bn defence budget, supported by a dedicated £800m Innovation Fund, to cutting-edge science and technology. 2017 has seen a number of exciting projects developed as part of the drive, to name just a few:

- A pocket-sized drone and a mini-detector known as Snake Eyes are amongst the new high-tech gadgets set to investigate future chemical or bio-hazards.
- A world-first in the US saw British soldiers controlling 4x4s with Xbox-style controllers and a UK driverless truck leading American trucks in an unmanned convoy, providing a glimpse into the future of getting much-

needed supplies to the front line.

- Cutting-edge fingerprint technology aimed at targeting criminals.
- A Laser Directed Energy Weapon that is capable of acquiring, tracking and engaging aerial and surface targets at various ranges and in different weather conditions.
- A new lightning-fast protection system, Icarus, which will be able to detect and defeat threats to armoured vehicles within 100 milliseconds.

The Defence Accelerator funds the development of suppliers' innovative ideas and provides support through to potential application. The Accelerator also funds innovations for defence and security which support economic growth and prosperity in the UK.

The Accelerator is approaching its first anniversary and has enjoyed great success, including:

- Launching 8 themed competitions
- Running 18 competition events
- Assessing over 630 proposals
- Funding 147 proposals with an investment of £17.3m

[Press release: Change of Governor of Montserrat in January 2018](#)

Mr Andrew Pearce OBE has been appointed Governor of Montserrat in succession to Ms Elizabeth Carriere who will be leaving the Diplomatic Service. Mr Pearce will take up his appointment during January 2018.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Full name: Andrew John Pearce OBE

Married to: Pornpun Pearce

Children: Two

2017 – present Vilnius, Chargé d'Affaires

2015 – 2016 FC0, Director of Security, FC0 Services

2009 – 2015 FC0, Head of Security, Estates and Security Directorate

2004 – 2008 Bangkok, Deputy Head of Mission and Political Counsellor

2000 – 2003 Bucharest, Deputy Head of Mission and Political Counsellor

1996 – 2000 Pretoria, Head, Economic and Trade Policy Team

1992 – 1996 Tel Aviv, Head, Press and Political Section

1990 – 1992 FC0, Head, Gibraltar and Iberian Section, Southern European Department, Europe Directorate

1988 – 1990 FC0, Head, Chemical and Biological Weapons Negotiating Team, Arms Control and Disarmament Department

Further information