

NHS recruits being driven away before they've even started – Jonathan Ashworth

Jonathan Ashworth MP, Labour's Shadow Health Secretary, responding to official UCAS figures published today which show that applications for undergraduate nursing degrees starting in September 2017 are down 23 percent compared with the previous year, said:

"The Government have been warned repeatedly that cutting bursaries and funding for student nurses would cut off the future supply of NHS staff. Now we have the proof that those warnings were right – 23 percent fewer people have applied to study nursing this year.

"Misguided reductions in training places under the Tory Government, combined with a never-ending pay squeeze, have left the NHS dangerously short of staff. Patients are seeing wards closed, operations cancelled and treatments delayed. Now the new recruits which the health service so desperately needs are being driven away before they've even started.

"The staff are the lifeblood of our NHS. They give their all to keep the system going in the face of underfunding and mismanagement by the Tories. The Government ought to get a grip, show our nursing students that their time and commitment is really valued, and give them the support they need when they're setting out on their careers."

Lesley Griffiths to hear views on Securing Wales' future

Lesley Griffiths is undertaking a series of visits to businesses and organisations in South Wales whose operations are likely to be impacted by the UK's impending exit from the EU.

The Cabinet Secretary will visit the Eastern Valleys Uplands Project in Blaenavon, the Two Sisters Red Meat processing site in Merthyr Tydfil and the Food Innovation Centre in Cardiff Metropolitan University. The day will culminate in a round-table cross-sector meeting with key agriculture and environment stakeholders in Cardiff Bay.

Among the issues likely to be raised during the visits and meeting are the importance of Welsh businesses having full and unfettered access to the European Single Market and how to achieve a balanced approach to immigration, linking migration to jobs.

Also expected to be discussed are maintaining the level of funding currently delivered by the EU to Wales' farmers and continuing social and environmental protections once these are no longer guaranteed through the UK's membership of the EU.

These are key issues that were set out in Securing Wales' Future, the comprehensive Brexit White Paper published last week by the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru.

Lesley Griffiths said:

"The Environment and Rural Affairs portfolio is, probably more than any other, hugely impacted by EU funding and legislation. Wales' thriving food and drink industry also benefits greatly from selling its produce into the EU and many are able to operate effectively by employing people from EU countries.

"The UK's withdrawal from the EU will undoubtedly have a major impact on individuals, businesses and organisations represented by my portfolio. Since the referendum result I have been eager that those who are going to be affected the most by Brexit have regular opportunities to feed their very real views and concerns into the highest levels of government.

"Through our White Paper, jointly produced with Plaid Cymru, we have clearly set out what we believe is a sensible starting point for negotiations. We believe our position balances concerns over immigration with the economic reality that makes full and unfettered access to the single market so central to Wales' future prosperity.

"I look forward to meeting a wide range of individuals and organisations and hearing their views on how we can deliver a Brexit that works for Wales, and for the rest of the United Kingdom."

Statement to Parliament: Airport capacity and airspace policy

Consultation on the draft Airports National Policy Statement

Today I will be laying before Parliament a draft Airports National Policy Statement and beginning a period of extensive public consultation on the policy proposals it contains. National policy statements were introduced under the Planning Act 2008 and are used to set out government policy on nationally significant infrastructure projects. This draft Airports National Policy Statement sets out the need for additional airport capacity, as well as the reasons why the government believes that need is best met by a north-west runway at Heathrow.

The:

- draft Airports National Policy Statement
- Appraisal of sustainability of the draft Airports National Policy Statement, incorporating a strategic environmental assessment
- Assessment of the policy under the Habitats and Wild Birds Directive
- Health impact analysis
- Equality impact assessment

will be made available online.

The Airports National Policy Statement, if designated, will provide the primary basis for making decisions on any development consent application for a new north-west runway at Heathrow Airport.

For a scheme to be compliant with the Airports National Policy Statement, the Secretary of State would expect Heathrow Airport Ltd to:

- demonstrate it has worked constructively with airlines on domestic connectivity – the government expects Heathrow to add 6 more domestic routes across the UK by 2030, bringing the total to 14, strengthening existing links to nations and regions, and also developing new connections
- provide compensation to communities who are affected by the expansion including noise insulation for homes and schools, improvements to public facilities and other measures – this includes establishing a community compensation fund and a community engagement board
- honour its commitment of payments for those people whose homes need to be compulsorily purchased to make way for the new runway or for those who take up the voluntary scheme of 25% above the full market value of their home and cover all costs including stamp duty, reasonable moving costs and legal fees
- put in place a number of measures to mitigate the impacts of noise,

including legally binding noise targets and periods of predictable respite – the government also expects a ban of 6 and a half hours on scheduled night flights

- set specific mode share targets to get more than half of airport users onto public transport, aimed at meeting its pledge of no more airport-related road traffic with expansion compared to today
- implement a package of industry-leading measures to limit carbon and air quality impacts both during construction and operation
- demonstrate that the scheme can be delivered in compliance with legal requirements on air quality

I have appointed Sir Jeremy Sullivan, the former Senior President of Tribunals, to provide independent oversight of the draft Airports National Policy Statement consultation process and ensure best practice is upheld.

Consultation on airspace policy

We need to think about how we manage the rising number of aircraft in an efficient and effective manner. By taking steps now to future-proof this vital infrastructure, we can harness the latest technology to make airspace more efficient as well as making journeys faster and more environmentally friendly.

I am therefore also publishing proposals to modernise the way UK airspace is managed, which will be consulted on in parallel. The policy principles set out in this airspace consultation influence decisions taken later in the planning process for a north-west runway at Heathrow, if the Airports National Policy Statement were to be designated, including how local communities can have their say on airspace matters and how impacts on them are taken into account.

It is an important issue and one that will define the principles for shaping our airspace for years to come. It is therefore sensible to allow members of the public to consider both matters at the same time.

The proposals being published for consultation today include the functions, structure and governance of an Independent Commission on Civil Aviation Noise, which we will establish. The commission would build relationships between industry and communities, embed a culture of best practice, and ensure an even fairer process for making changes to airspace.

The proposed new call-in function for a Secretary of State on airspace changes, similar to that used by the Secretary of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government for planning applications, create a democratic back-stop in the most significant decisions, much called for by communities.

The consultation on airspace policy, new Air navigation guidance and the Strategic rationale for upgrading the UK's airspace will be made available online.

Aviation strategy

The aviation sector is a great British success story, contributing around £20 billion per year and directly supporting approximately 230,000 jobs across the United Kingdom. It also supports an estimated 260,000 jobs across the wider economy.

I want to build on this success. My department is currently progressing work to develop a new strategy for UK aviation.

This strategy will champion the success story of the UK's aviation sector. It will put the consumer back at the heart of our thinking. The strategy will also explore how we can maximise the positive role that our world class aviation sector plays in developing global trade links, providing vital connections to both the world's growing economies and more established trading partners. Connections that will only grow in importance as our trading network expands.

I will come back to the House to update you on our plans for the strategy as they develop over the coming weeks.

Consultation and Parliamentary scrutiny

These 2 consultations will last for 16 weeks and close on 25 May 2017. At the same time, and as required by the Planning Act 2008, a period of Parliamentary scrutiny (the 'relevant period') now begins for the Airports National Policy Statement, ending by summer recess 2017.

I will be placing copies of all relevant documents in the Libraries of both Houses. Following consultation and Parliamentary scrutiny, and assuming that in the light of these processes the decision is made to proceed, we expect to lay a final Airports National Policy Statement before Parliament for debate and an expected vote in the House of Commons by winter 2017-18.

[Press release: New plans to crack down on backstreet puppy breeders](#)

Tougher dog breeding licensing rules to better protect thousands of puppies are to be introduced as part of [a swathe of reforms to safeguard the welfare of Britain's pets](#), Environment Secretary Andrea Leadsom announced today.

The plans to tighten up laws around selling pets and breeding dogs will make it completely illegal to sell puppies younger than eight weeks and require anyone breeding and selling three or more litters of puppies a year to apply for a formal licence. Irresponsible breeders who don't stick to these rules

face an unlimited fine and/or up to six months in prison.

The new rules will mean smaller establishments – sometimes called ‘backstreet breeders’ – which supply thousands of dogs to families each year, as well as larger commercial breeders, must meet strict welfare criteria to get a licence. Irresponsible breeders can neglect the health and welfare of the puppies they raise and may not properly vaccinate them, leading to steep vets’ bills and heartbreak for buyers.

The rules will also be updated and made fit for the modern age with anyone trading commercially in pets online needing to be properly licensed, to help make reputable sellers easily accessible to prospective buyers.

The plans also cover how pet shops, boarding houses and riding stables are licensed, introducing a single ‘animal activities licence’ to improve the process and make enforcement easier.

Environment Secretary Andrea Leadsom said:

Everyone who owns a pet or is looking to introduce one into their life will want to know that the animal has had the very best start to life. Yet for thousands of puppies born each year to irresponsible breeders, from smaller operations to larger puppy farms, their first weeks are spent in cramped and squalid conditions without the care and attention they need. That is why we are cracking down on the worst offenders by strengthening the dog breeding licence and giving councils the power they need to take action.

With more and more pet sales now taking place on the internet, it’s right that this market is subject to the same strict licensing criteria as other breeders and pet shops so that consumers are not misled. The plans announced today will help people choosing new family pets to be confident the animals have been properly bred and cared for from birth and are ready to move safely to their new homes.

Under the new plans, pet shops will also be required to give buyers written information about the animals they buy, with details of the five welfare needs owners must meet under the Animal Welfare Act around environment, diet, behaviour, housing and freedom from pain. This advice is particularly important when buying exotic pets, which can have very specific welfare needs.

Welcoming the plans, Dogs Trust Veterinary Director, Paula Boyden, said:

As the UK’s largest dog welfare charity, Dogs Trust welcomes the Government’s review of animal establishments licensing in England and the range of measures it sets out.

We are particularly pleased that it will be illegal to sell a puppy below the age of 8 weeks and that there will be tighter licensing rules which will require sellers of pets to display their licence when advertising. We also applaud the move towards a risk based single licensing system which will incorporate those breeders that have gained UKAS approval rather than exempting them.

We believe that Local Authority Inspectors need support to enforce these tighter licensing rules. As such, moves to mandate the use of Model Conditions and for inspectors to be offered training and standards to be set is most welcome.

Caroline Kisko, Kennel Club Secretary said:

We are pleased that Defra will be taking forward proposals to ban the sale of puppies under the age of 8 weeks by commercial third parties; we have called for a ban on third party sales, and refuse to register puppies being sold to third parties, but this new rule is a step in the right direction. We also welcome the requirement for pet sellers to provide written information about the animals they sell and for those who sell pets online to display their licence number.

As the litter licensing threshold is set to reduce from five litters to three we look forward to working with Defra on the new risk based licensing system, to ensure that UKAS accredited Assured Breeder Scheme (ABS) members will continue to be inspected by the Kennel Club for the maximum licence length of three years. This will incentivise more breeders to join the scheme, and breed to a higher standard of welfare than the ABS requires, and reduce the inspection burden on local authorities.

Pet owners are also being urged to make sure their pet's microchip details are up to date. Latest figures show 94% of dogs have been fitted with microchips, nine months after the Government introduced a law requiring all dogs to be painlessly fitted with a chip containing their owner's details. But a Battersea Dogs and Cats Home study of stray dogs last year found that only 20% of their microchips contained up to date information.

It's vital that owners who move house or change their phone number make sure they keep their pet's details up to date, so they can be reunited should their four-legged friend ever go missing. Owners can check with their microchip provider that their details are correct.

Andrea Leadsom added:

It is absolutely critical that owners not only make sure their pet is microchipped, but that they also make sure details are kept up to date so they can be reunited if their pet is lost or stolen.

It is excellent to see that so many owners have taken action to get their dogs chipped, yet all too many still need to be rehomed because the owner hasn't updated their details—heart-breaking for the owner and the dog, and easily avoidable with a five-minute phone call.

[More information on buying a cat or dog](#)

1. Read [The review of animal establishments licensing in England: Next steps](#)
2. [Summary of responses to the review](#)
3. Many welfare charities also offer free guidance on buying a pet. The RSPCA offers a 'puppy contract' – a document signed by the buyer and seller confirming that both parties have or will meet their obligations to the puppy's welfare.
4. The [Animal Welfare Act 2006](#) covers all animals in England, and details their five welfare needs.
5. [Information on the requirement to get your dog microchipped](#)
6. [Advice on getting your pet microchipped](#)
7. Estimated number of microchips with out-of-date information from 'Microchipping Where It Matters Most', by Battersea Dogs and Cats Home, 2016.
8. For further media queries, please contact Defra press office on 020 8225 7618 or 020 8026 3005.

[Government response: New child car seat rules: no change for existing booster seats](#)

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Existing booster seats and cushions are not affected by new rules coming into force by March 2017.

By 1 March 2017 new rules are being introduced across Europe that will change how backless booster seats (booster cushions) are made.

The new rules mean that manufacturers aren't allowed to introduce new models of backless booster seats for children shorter than 125cm or weighing less

than 22kg.

Existing seats not affected by new rules

The change doesn't affect existing models of seats or cushions and doesn't mean that they are unsafe or illegal – though parents are still being encouraged to make sure they know the [rules for using child car seats](#).

The change to the technical standards means that the range of products available on the market are better suited for younger children.