



# Stray dog survey report

2024-25

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background and objectives

The Dogs Trust Stray Dog Survey (SDS) has been conducted annually since 1997, involving all local authorities (LAs) across the UK. This survey gathers comprehensive data on dog-related services provided by LAs and their interactions with dogs.

**The SDS aims to determine several key metrics, including (but not limited to):**

- **The estimated number of stray or unwanted dogs handled by UK LAs each year.**
- **The methods by which these dogs come into LA care (e.g., handed in by the public, seized as strays, handed over by the police).**
- **The outcomes for these dogs (e.g., returned to their owners, rehomed, transferred to welfare organizations, put to sleep).**
- **The number of dogs that are microchipped on arrival.**
- **Factors influencing the reunification of dogs with their owners (e.g. up-to-date microchips, collars, and ID tags with owner contact details).**

Dogs Trust uses this information to analyse trends over time and to strategically allocate resources for various initiatives and interventions. The findings are made publicly available for use by other interested people to support improvements in dog welfare.

From 1997 to 2019, an external market research company managed the SDS on behalf of Dogs Trust, handling survey distribution, data analysis, and report production. Since 2020, Dogs Trust staff have taken over all aspects of the SDS management.



## 1.2 Methodology

### 1.2.1 Data collection

The 2024/2025 SDS was administered to all LAs through the Qualtrics online survey platform. Drawing on our records from previous years, we contacted each LA using the method that had previously proven most effective: LAs that had been reached via Freedom of Information (FOI) request received the questionnaire through an FOI request, while those that had responded to email in past years were sent the survey link directly by email. LAs were first contacted on July 17<sup>th</sup> 2025. If an email bounced back or an automated reply indicated that the mailbox was no longer in use, attempts were made to find a viable contact email on the council website. A follow-up email reminder was sent two weeks later. Responses to FOI requests continued to be received until the end of November 2025. Local Authorities were asked to give figures for the period between April 1<sup>st</sup> 2024 – March 31<sup>st</sup> 2025.

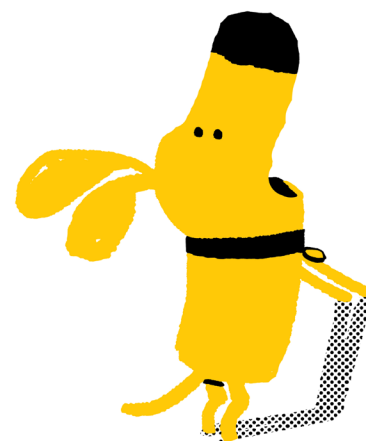
### 1.2.2 Analysis

Summary statistics were calculated using data provided by those local authorities (LAs) that responded to the survey, and estimates were made for the entire UK and devolved nations. Since not all LAs participated, national totals were extrapolated from the data provided by those that did. Previously, this was done by calculating the average number of dogs handled per responding LA and multiplying it by the total number of LAs in the UK (referred to as the simple average estimate). However, in 2022, we introduced an additional method using multilevel analysis. This approach was advantageous because it utilized all available data from each LA to predict the number of stray dogs for each year, rather than assigning the same figure to all LAs. This allowed for “weighting” LAs based on whether they typically reported higher or lower numbers of dogs (referred to as the weighted estimate). For consistency with previous reports, both the simple average and weighted estimates are presented in this report

The number of dogs per 10,000 people (DPP) was calculated by dividing the total number of dogs handled by each LA by the human population of that LA, then multiplying by 10,000. Human population figures were obtained from the latest publicly available data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS)<sup>1</sup>. Higher DPP numbers indicate more dogs in relation to the human population in each area. This adjusts for inevitable differences in total numbers of dogs between heavily and sparsely populated areas.

Regional comparisons within the UK are primarily made at the country level (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales). For average numbers of dogs handled, the data was further divided using the administrative geographical regions defined by the ONS<sup>2</sup>. Consequently, England is the only country broken down into regions, while figures for Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland are reported at the country level throughout the report.

The SDS previously referred to the total number of dogs handled by local authorities (LAs) as the total number of stray dogs. However, the term “stray” encompasses various meanings, and not all dogs handled by LAs are found straying (i.e., free-roaming and unaccompanied by a human). For instance, some dogs are relinquished directly to the LA by their owners. In this survey report, we use the term “total dogs handled” instead of “strays.” To prevent double counting between different surveys, “total dogs handled” includes only dogs that newly arrived at the LA during the survey period, excluding those already in the LA’s care before this period.



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/geography/ukgeographies/administrativegeography>

## 2. Summary of findings

### 2.1 Response Rate

We were able to obtain 2024-2025 data from 216 LAs. This represents around 60% of the 361 LAs in the UK when the survey was administered, with a range from 51% to 100% across regions (Table 1). It should be noted that 6 Northern Ireland LAs did not respond to the survey, but we were able to obtain some of the required data from publicly available records collected by DAERA (The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs of Northern Ireland).<sup>3</sup>

#### Response rates for the most recent surveys were:

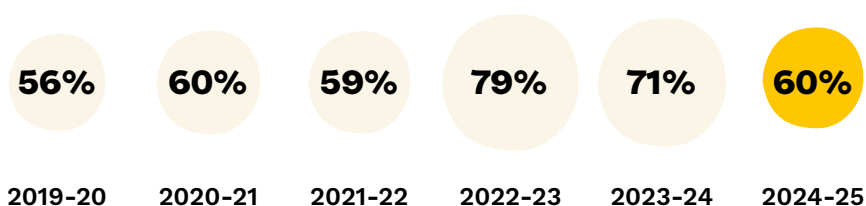


Table 1. Response rate for LAs in different UK regions 2025 (descending order)

Region	Number of LAs that responded to SDS	Total LAs in region	Response rate
<b>NORTHERN IRELAND*</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100%</b>
North East England	10	12	83%
Yorkshire and the Humber	11	15	73%
<b>WALES</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>68%</b>
South West England	18	27	67%
East Midlands	23	35	66%
<b>SCOTLAND</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>59%</b>
<b>ENGLAND (ALL)</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>58%</b>
West Midlands	17	30	57%
East England	24	45	53%
South East England	33	64	52%
London	17	33	52%
North West England	18	35	51%

\*NOTE: Six local authorities in NI did not respond to the survey, however, some of their data were able to be added from a publicly available data source (DAERA website)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/council-dog-summary-statistics-202526>

## 2.2 Number of dogs handled

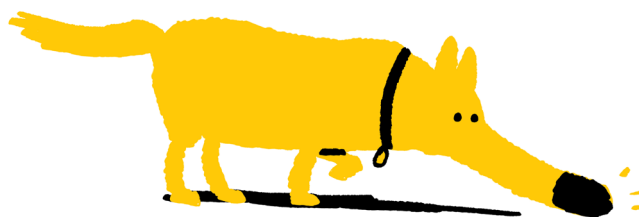
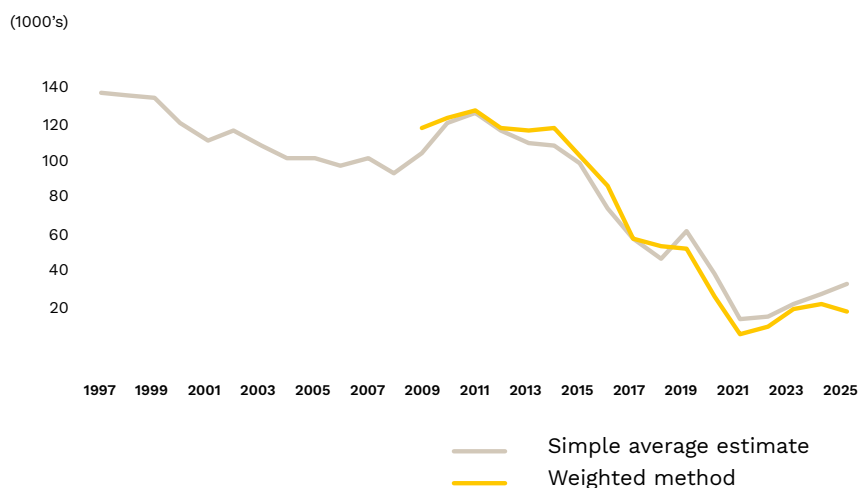
The 216 LAs that provided data reported handling a total of 25,714 new dogs in the period between April 1<sup>st</sup> 2024- March 31<sup>st</sup> 2025. There were 628 dogs reportedly already in LA care at the start of this period, therefore LAs handled a total of 26,342 dogs altogether. On average each LA handled around 123 new dogs during the period of study. These figures are higher than those recorded last year; in the period between April 1<sup>st</sup> 2023- March 31<sup>st</sup> 2024, a total of 23,766 new dogs were reportedly handled by the 225 LAs that completed the 2023-24 survey (with an average of 110 dogs per LA).

Based on reported figures from LAs, multi-level analysis provided a weighted estimate of 31644 dogs handled by LAs across the UK between April 1<sup>st</sup> 2024- March 31<sup>st</sup> 2025. This represents a decrease of over 2000 dogs compared to the 2024 estimate. The simple average estimate was 44415 dogs. Figure 1 illustrates the overall decline in the estimated number of dogs handled by LAs since the SDS was first administered in 1997. The grey line represents the estimates made using the method used in previous reports (i.e., the simple average estimate) and the yellow line represents the weighted estimate (please refer to page 3 for a more detailed description of this method). Multi-level analysis could not be conducted for surveys prior to 2009, because data for individual LAs before this date was not retained (only the nationwide totals).

As can be seen in Figure 1, there has been an overall decline in the number of stray dogs since the survey began in 1997. There was a period between 2008 and 2012 where the numbers started to increase, followed by a steeper period of decline from around 2014 to 2018. There was a brief plateau in numbers around 2018-2019, followed by another steep decline. In the last 3 years, the numbers have started to rise again. We cannot be certain of the causes of these patterns, but some possible explanations are discussed in the conclusion to this report.

Figure 1

**Estimated total number of dogs handled by UK local authorities**  
(1997-2025)



There were regional differences in the number of dogs handled (Table 2). As mentioned previously, England is divided by regions but is also shown collectively in Table 2. Figure 2 shows the differences in the average number of dogs handled per LA between the 4 UK countries (top), and the differences in dogs per person (presented as per 10,000 people) (bottom).

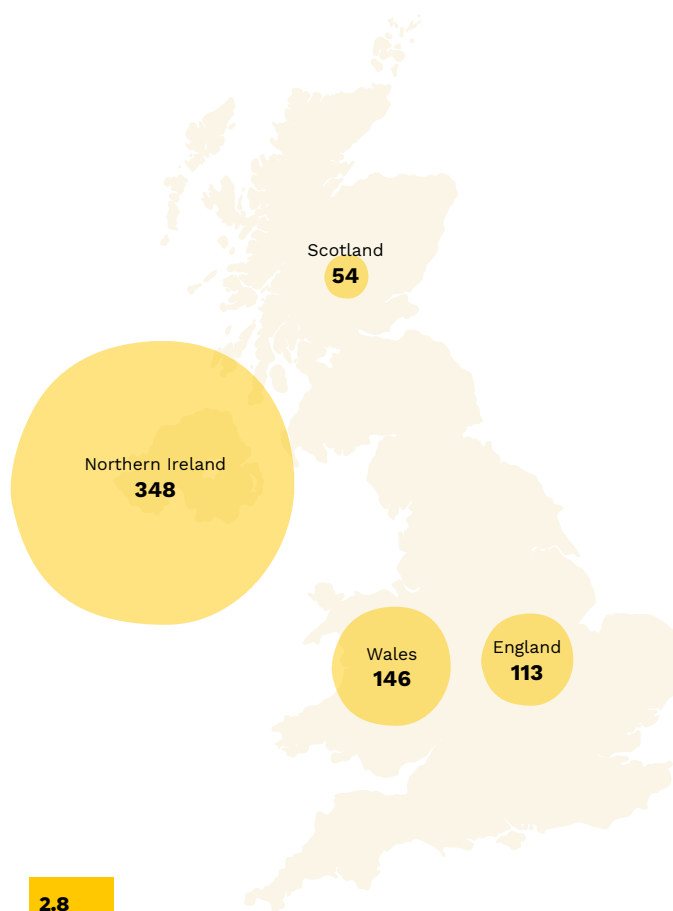
**Table 2: Regional breakdown of average total dogs handled and dogs per 10,000 people (DPP) per LA (in descending order of DPP) (2024-2025)**

Region	Number of LAs in region (that completed survey)	Average total dogs handled per LA	Average dogs per 10,000 people, per LA
<b>NORTHERN IRELAND</b>	11	348	20.7
North East England	10	245	10.8
<b>WALES</b>	15	146	9.3
West Midlands	17	156	6.9
East Midlands	23	94	6.8
East England	24	83	5.8
Yorkshire and the Humber	11	228	5.6
<b>ENGLAND (all regions)</b>	171	113	5.5
North West England	18	128	5.1
South East England	33	64	4.8
London	17	95	3.4
South West England	18	83	3.3
<b>SCOTLAND</b>	19	54	2.8

Figure 2

## Average number of dogs handled per local authority, by country

(2024-2025)



## Average dogs per 10,000 people, by country

(2024-2025)



## 2.3 How do dogs arrive at local authorities?

Dogs come into the care of LAs via different routes. Consistent with previous years, the majority of dogs arrived at LAs after being taken in as strays. In previous surveys, LAs were given the option to record dogs “seized as strays” or “brought in by a member of the public”. However, these categories did not differentiate between members of the public bringing in a dog that they had found straying, and people who were handing over (i.e. relinquishing) their own dog. We believe this is an important distinction, so from the 2022-2023 survey onwards we asked if dogs were taken in as strays or relinquished by their owner, then went on to clarify whether strays were brought in by a member of the public, or found/picked up by LA staff. Table 3 shows the breakdown of ways dogs arrived at LAs using this new distinction. However, for Figure 3 we have merged the strays and relinquished dogs brought in by members of the public so that it is comparable to previous years’ data.

**Table 3: How dogs arrived at LAs (2024-2025)**

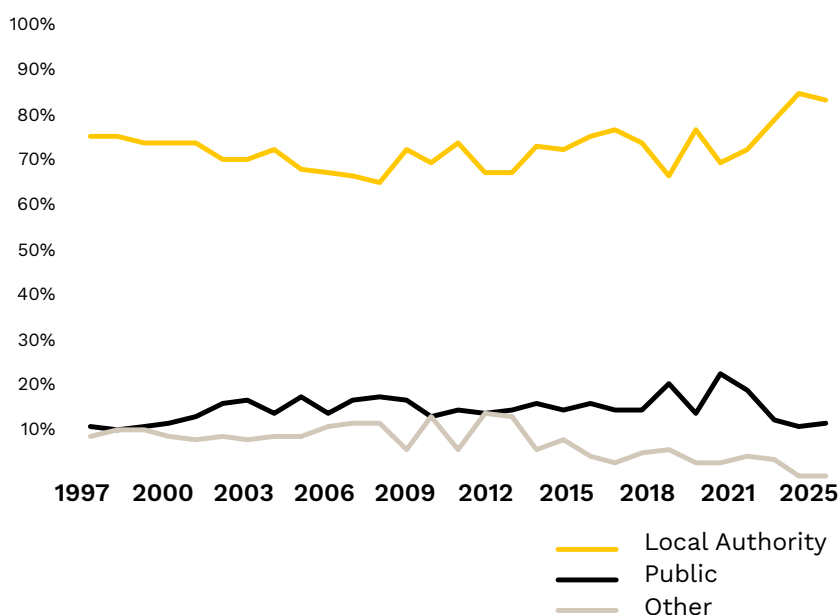
Arrival type	Number	Percentage (inc. all responses)
Found as stray- Collected by LA staff	7834	38%
Found as stray- Brought in by member of the public	1210	6%
Found as stray- Brought in by police	133	1%
Found as stray- Brought in via vet practice	549	3%
Found as stray- Other	246	1%
Found as stray- Specific arrival route unknown	8979	44%
Relinquished by owner	1398	7%
Other	142	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20491*</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* This figure is less than the overall total number of dogs that arrived at LAs because for 5223 dogs (25%) the arrival type was unknown/not recorded

**Figure 3**

### How dogs were brought to local authorities

% of dogs (1997-2025)



Only 20 councils reported any dogs being seized in response to the Dangerous Dogs Act/Order (DDA), with 101 dogs in total reportedly seized in this way (a very slight increase in the total number reported compared to the 2024 survey, where 97 were recorded). It has come to our attention based on free text within the survey that this question misunderstands how LAs deal with dangerous dogs; LAs do not typically seize dogs in response to the DDA. Rather, the DDA dictates how LAs deal with dogs once they have been seized. This question will be reviewed for future surveys.

There was some regional variation in the arrival routes of dogs handled by LAs. In England and Wales, over 90% of dogs arrived as strays (98% and 96%, respectively). However, in Scotland and Northern Ireland, 86% and 71%, respectively, were taken in as strays, and the majority of the remaining dogs were surrendered by their owners to the LA.

## 2.4 What happens to the dogs handled by local authorities?

In total, approximately 38% of dogs taken in by LAs were reunited with their owners during 2024-25 (either reclaimed during the kennelling period or returned without kennelling) (Table 4). This is the lowest reported percentage of dogs reunited with their owners since the survey began in 1997. This figure has been in steep decline since the 2020-2021 survey (where 68% of dogs were reportedly reunited with their owners).



# 38%

**of dogs taken in by LAs were reunited with their owners during 2024-25 (39% in 2023-24)**

Collectively, LAs reported 2019 dogs being put to sleep (PTS) during the study period (9% of dogs for which outcomes were known). It is estimated that this translates to around 3374 dogs entering the care of LAs being PTS across the UK during the study period. There has been an overall reduction in the proportion of dogs being PTS by LAs over the years, down from 14% in 2000, 6% in 2010 and 2% in 2020. However, last year's survey showed a 6% increase compared to 2022-23, with the estimated number of dogs PTS across the UK increasing by over 1800. This year the estimate increased again by 881.

We asked LAs to record reasons for PTS; out of those for which the reason was known (for around 40% of dogs PTS the reason was unknown), 279 (23%) were PTS due to ill health, 457 (37%) were PTS due to behavioural issues, and 434 (35%) were PTS due to the Dangerous Dogs Act (DDA; or banned breeds). In comparison, the figures for these three categories of PTS reasons in the 2023-24 survey were as follows: ill health; 225 (25%), behavioural issues; 369 (42%), Dangerous Dogs Act; 212 (24%). The figures for these three categories of PTS reasons in the 2022-23 survey were 176 (45%), 178 (46%) and 27 (7%) respectively. Figure 4 shows the changes in reasons for PTS from 2020-2025.

Figure 4

### Reasons for dogs being put to sleep

% of dogs (2020-2025)

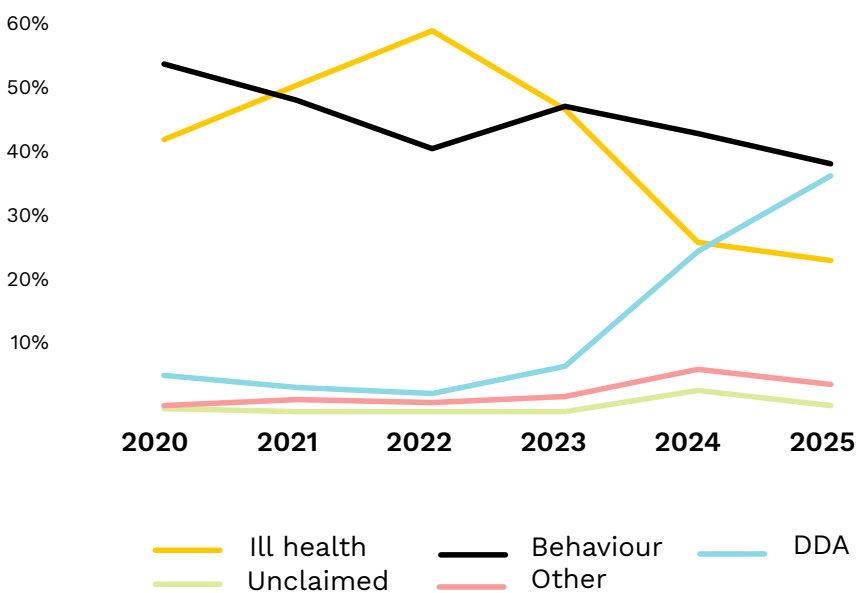


Table 4 includes outcomes for all dogs handled during the study period – these include dogs who were in the care of LAs during the study period, but arrived before the study period commenced (pre 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024). Therefore, the total number is slightly greater than the total taken in during the period. Figure 5 shows the proportions of dogs brought in that met the four most common outcomes across time. As can be seen in Figure 5, the proportion of dogs being passed on to welfare organisations surpassed the proportion reunited with their original owners by the LA for the first time in 2024, and this trend has continued in the 2025. Table 5 shows each outcome broken down by country.

**Table 4: Outcomes for dogs handled by LAs (2024-2025)**

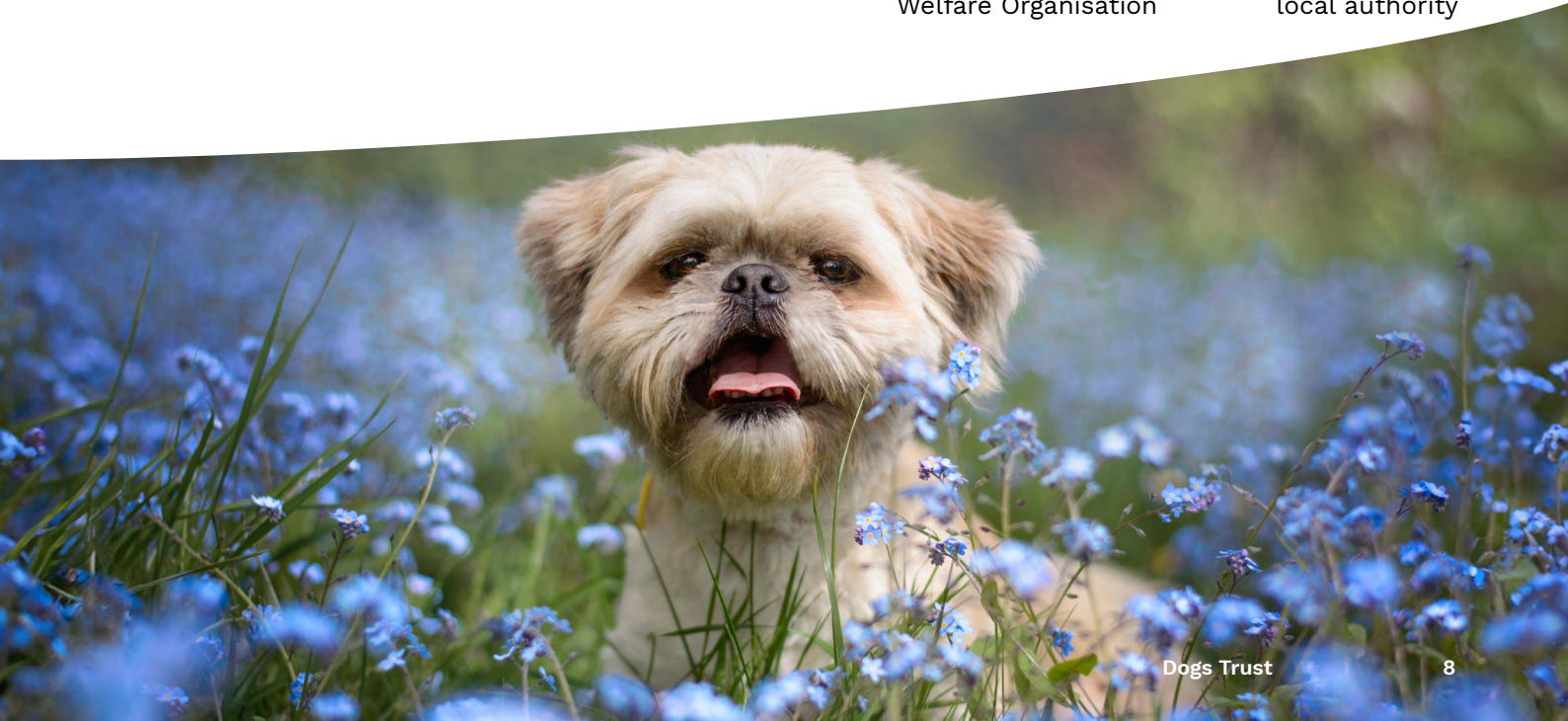
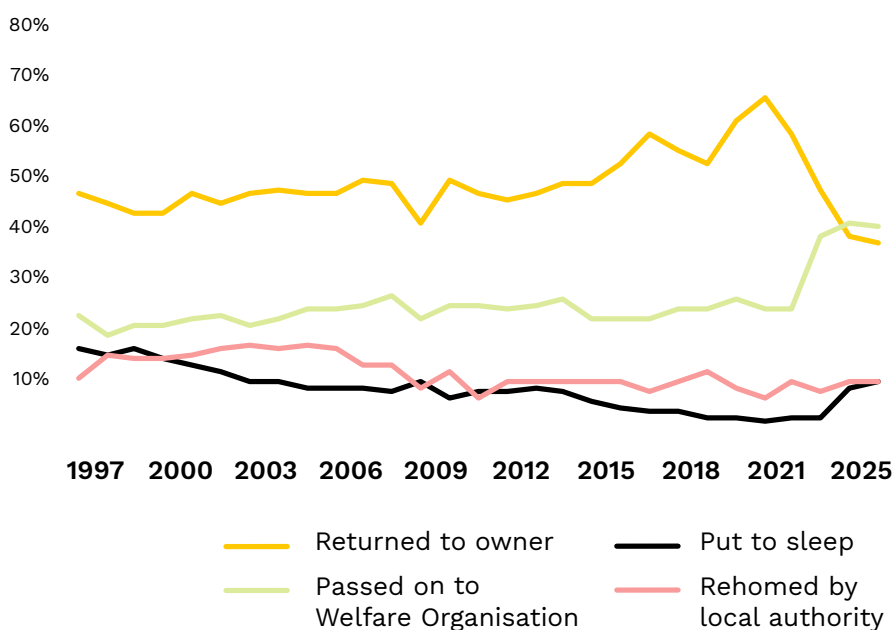
Outcome	Number of dogs	Percentage
Still in Local Authority kennels after 31st March 2025	251	1%
Reunited with their original owners	8601	38%
Rehomed by the local authority (to new owners)	2087	9%
Passed on to a welfare organisation	9249	41%
Put to sleep	2019	9%
Other outcome	284	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>22491*</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* This figure is less than the overall total number of dogs handled because for 3851 dogs (15%), the outcome was unknown/not recorded

**Figure 5**

### What happens to dogs in local authority care?

% of dogs (2020-2025)



**Table 5: Outcomes for dogs handled by LAs broken down by country (2024-2025)**

Outcome	England	%
Still in Local Authority kennels after 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2024	202	1%
Reunited with their original owners	6627	41%
Rehomed by the local authority (to new owners)	1262	8%
Passed on to a welfare organisation	6223	38%
Put to sleep	1599	10%
Other	271	2%
<b>TOTAL*</b>	<b>16184</b>	

Outcome	Northern Ireland	%
Still in Local Authority kennels after 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2024	6	<1%
Reunited with their original owners	933	26%
Rehomed by the local authority (to new owners)	447	13%
Passed on to a welfare organisation	1888	53%
Put to sleep	298	8%
Other	2	<1%
<b>TOTAL*</b>	<b>3574</b>	

Outcome	Scotland	%
Still in Local Authority kennels after 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2024	2	<1%
Reunited with their original owners	500	65%
Rehomed by the local authority (to new owners)	103	13%
Passed on to a welfare organisation	132	17%
Put to sleep	29	4%
Other	0	0%
<b>TOTAL*</b>	<b>766</b>	

Outcome	Wales	%
Still in Local Authority kennels after 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2024	41	2%
Reunited with their original owners	541	28%
Rehomed by the local authority (to new owners)	275	14%
Passed on to a welfare organisation	1006	51%
Put to sleep	93	5%
Other	11	1%
<b>TOTAL*</b>	<b>1967</b>	

\*Totals do not add up to the total number of dogs handled, as we have only included dogs for which the outcome was known.



## 2.5 Microchipping

Among the LAs that provided information about the microchip status of the dogs they handled, approximately 61% of dogs were already microchipped before being handled by the LA. This is similar to the proportion recorded the previous year (60%). Microchipping figures over the past 5 surveys are plotted in Figure 6. It should be noted that many LAs responding to the survey did not provide us with microchipping figures, therefore the microchip status of around 43% of dogs included in the survey was unknown. Of the dogs who were recorded as having a microchip on arrival at the LA (and for whom it was known whether or not their chip had the correct details), only around 31% reportedly had correct owner details on their chip. The remaining dogs either had chips with incorrect owner details (56%), unregistered chips (12%) or the database was not recognised (1%) (Figure 7).

The majority (69%) of the LAs responding to this survey did not offer a microchipping service (Table 6). This is similar to the proportion who reported not offering a microchipping service in the previous survey (65%). Furthermore, in the 2019-2020 survey, 32% of LAs reported that their microchipping service was free for the owner, this has decreased over the last four years; to 14% (2021), 12% (2022), 9% (2023 and 2024) and finally 6% in 2025. This information is plotted alongside microchipping figures over the past 5 surveys in Figure 6.

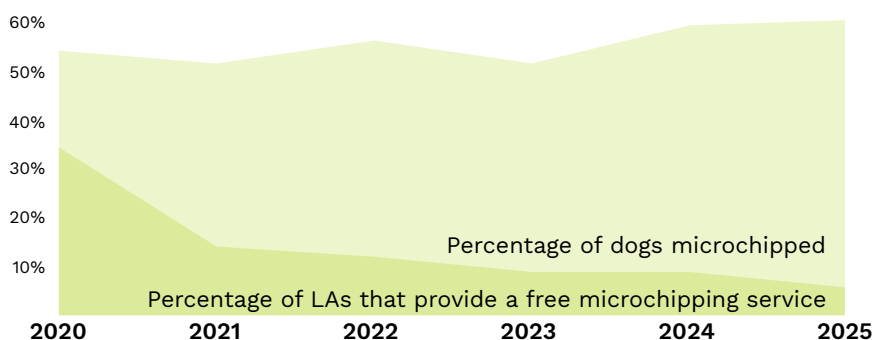
**Table 6: Responses to “Do you offer a microchipping service?” (2024-2025)**

Response	Count	Percentage
No	150	69%
Yes, fully funded (free to the owner)	12	6%
Yes, owner pays the full amount	24	11%
Yes, partially funded (owner pays reduced fee)	20	9%
No Response	10	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>216</b>	

**Figure 6**

**Microchipping rates and proportion of LAs offering a free microchipping service**

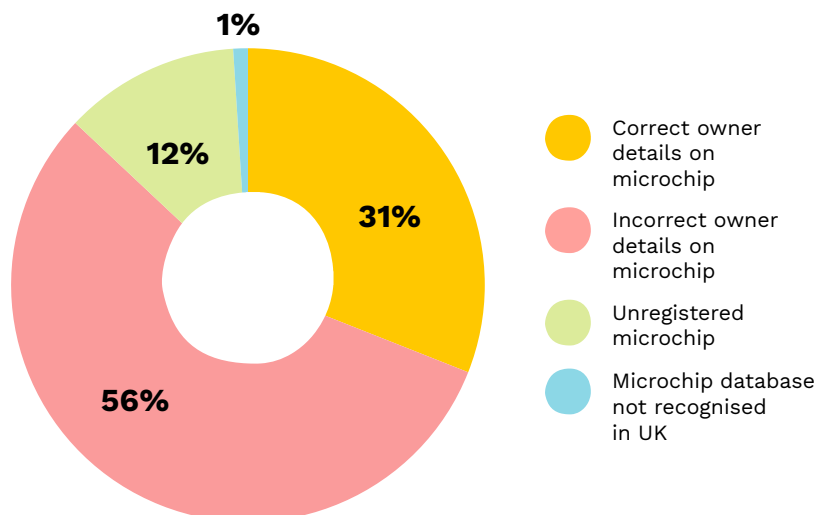
(2020-2025)



**Figure 7**

**What proportion of microchipped dogs have correct owner details on their chip?**

(2024-2025)



## 2.6 Current management of dog-warden services

This year, 89 LAs (41%) reported that their dog warden was employed directly by them, compared to 67 LAs (31%) who contracted the service out. These proportions are similar to last year (48% directly employed and 32% contracted out). Furthermore, 13% said they had used a combination of directly employed and contracted services, while 5% said there was no dedicated dog warden service in their LA. The remaining LAs did not specify how their service were managed. This year we asked LAs to tell us how many of each type of kennel facilities they use to house dogs. Of the total 297 facilities reported across all LAs, 65% were private boarding kennels, 24% were welfare charity kennels, and 8% were council owned kennels.

We also asked how many full-time and part-time staff LAs have dedicated to stray dog services. Fifty-four LAs (25%) reported having at least 1 full time member of staff whose role is dedicated entirely to dog-related services. A further 2 LAs said they had at least one part time member of staff whose role is dedicated entirely to dog related services. Of the remaining councils, 113 reported varying numbers of full and part time staff for whom dog related duties were only part of their role (e.g. environmental officers whose role covers pest control, animal licencing, etc. as well as stray dogs). Forty-seven councils did not report any staff working in stray dog services, however, many of these contracted their services out, so they were unlikely to know the numbers.

## 2.7 Predominant breed types

Local authorities were asked to report the top 3 breeds that were seized/brought in. Table 8 shows 2 lists: Firstly, the number of LAs that listed each breed as one of their top three (e.g. 88 (41%) of the LAs listed Staffordshire Bull Terriers (SBT) or their crosses among their top 3 breeds). The second list is the number of LAs who listed each breed as their number 1 most common only (e.g. 42 (19%) of the LAs listed Staffordshire Bull Terriers (SBT) or their crosses as the number 1 most common breed). The two lists are ordered independently. Many LAs listed “types” rather than specific breeds, for example; “bull breed types” or “terriers”. Staffordshire Bull terriers have been the breed most commonly listed consistently over the last few years, with crossbreeds, Jack Russell terriers and lurchers frequently featuring in the top three.

# 41%

of the LAs listed Staffordshire Bull Terriers (SBT) or their crosses among their top 3 breeds seized/brought in.

Table 7: Breeds most commonly handled by LAs 2024-2025 (descending order)

Listed in top 3 (1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> , OR 3 <sup>rd</sup> most common)			First most common only		
Breed	Count	%	Breed	Count	%
Staffordshire bull terrier (or SBT cross)	88	41%	Staffordshire bull terrier (or SBT cross)	42	19%
Lurcher	67	31%	Lurcher	32	15%
Bully mix/type	61	28%	Crossbreed (unknown mix)	31	14%
Crossbreed (unknown mix)	57	26%	Bully mix/type	25	12%
Terrier mix/type	48	22%	Terrier mix/type	12	6%
Jack Russell Terrier	46	21%	Jack Russell Terrier	10	5%
Spaniel (springer or cocker)	24	11%	French bulldog	5	2%
German Shepherd Dog	24	11%	Spaniel (springer or cocker)	4	2%
French bulldog	23	11%	Border collie	3	1%
Border collie	12	6%	Labrador	2	1%





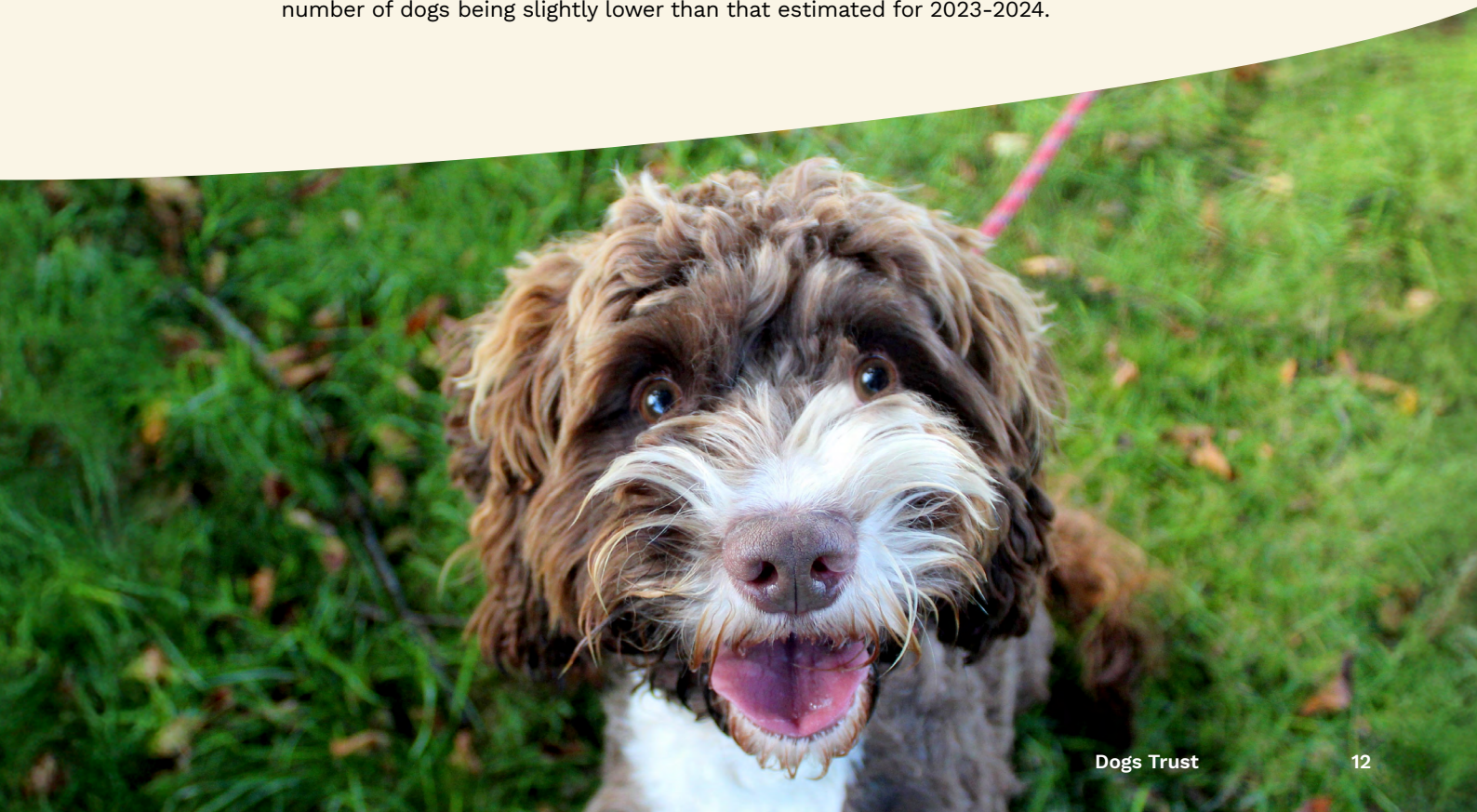
### 3. Conclusions


**The annual Stray Dog Survey indicates that the number of dogs handled by LAs in the UK has declined overall since 1997. This downward trend continued steadily until a brief increase between 2008-2010, possibly linked to the 2008 financial crisis, which may have led to more pet relinquishments due to financial hardship. A sharper decline from 2015 to 2018 coincided with the 2016 legislation mandating microchipping, likely facilitating the return of dogs to their owners without LA intervention.**

While compulsory microchipping has likely played a role in reducing stray dog numbers, other laws may have contributed too. The Animal Welfare Act 2006 made it an offence to abandon dogs, and the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 empowered LAs to issue Dog Control Orders, such as requiring leads or banning dogs from certain areas. Although a direct link to the decline in strays can't be confirmed, these laws reflect a broader societal shift toward tighter control of dogs, driven by concerns for public safety and animal welfare. Urbanisation and increased traffic may also discourage owners from letting dogs roam freely. Additionally, we can't rule out the possibility that the decline in reported stray numbers may be influenced by the reduced capacity of LAs to handle strays. Financial challenges have forced LAs to cut services, possibly affecting dog-related services, thereby reducing the number of dogs they are able to take in. Additionally, increased use of social media to reunite dogs may mean some lost dogs bypass LAs altogether.

The 2020-21 survey recorded the lowest number of dogs handled since the survey began, with a significant drop from the 2019-20 figures. This period, from April 1, 2020, to March 31, 2021, was marked by COVID-19 restrictions, which may have either reduced the number of stray or abandoned dogs or limited LA capacity to collect and house them (or a combination of both).

Following the 2020-2021 survey period, the estimated number of dogs handled has begun to rise once more, showing steady year-on-year growth. This upward trend aligns with the onset of the UK's cost of living crisis, which began in 2021 and continues to affect households. Findings from Dogs Trust's "Dog-flation" report indicate that dog owners may be feeling this pressure particularly acutely, as the expenses associated with keeping a dog were increasing at a faster rate than many other household costs from August 2022 to December 2024. These financial challenges are likely contributing to more owners struggling to cope, potentially leading some to consider relinquishing their pets. This more recent upwards trend plateaued in the 2024-2025 period, with the estimated number of dogs being slightly lower than that estimated for 2023-2024.





Lower response rates in recent years mean that UK wide estimates may be less precise, as they are based on a smaller sample that may not fully reflect all LAs. To partially address this, we applied multilevel modelling to generate better estimates for LAs that did not submit data, drawing on trends from previous years. While this approach is likely more reliable than using a simple national average, it cannot fully account for non responding LAs that may have had unusually high or low numbers of dogs.

When comparing the numbers of dogs handled between regions, Northern Ireland consistently stands out each year, with LAs there managing higher numbers of dogs on average and having a greater number of dogs per 10,000 people than other parts of the UK. This pattern aligns with operational insights from Dogs Trust's work in Northern Ireland. Together, these indications highlight the need for targeted interventions to address the underlying factors contributing to the greater demand on LA dog services within the region.

The ways in which dogs enter LA care have remained relatively consistent over time, with most dogs being taken in as strays. In Northern Ireland, although strays still make up the largest proportion of dogs handled by LAs, this majority is smaller compared with England, Scotland, and Wales. A comparatively higher proportion of dogs in Northern Ireland are surrendered directly by their owners. This pattern points to differences in how the public engage with LA dog services across the UK and may help to explain why Northern Ireland consistently records higher overall numbers of dogs entering LA care.

Since the survey's inception, there was a gradual increase in the proportion of dogs reunited with their owners by LAs, peaking in 2021. However, since this peak the numbers have declined again year-on-year. In the 2023-2024 survey, for the first time in the Stray Dog Survey's history, the proportion of dogs passed on to welfare organisations exceeded the numbers reunited with their owners by the LA. The 2024-2025 responses show the same pattern, indicating that last year's results were not an anomaly and may reflect an emerging and concerning shift in the outcomes for dogs entering LA care. The reasons behind this sudden decline in reunifications are uncertain, but financial pressures on LAs—along with associated service cuts—may have reduced their capacity to return dogs to their owners, thereby increasing reliance on welfare organisations. Because LAs typically do not track outcomes once dogs leave their care, it is unknown whether some of those handed over to welfare organisations were ultimately reunited with their owners through the efforts of the organisations that took them in.

**“For the second consecutive year, local authorities passed more stray dogs to welfare organisations than returned them to their owners”**

Overall, there has been a gradual decrease in the number of dogs put to sleep (PTS) by LAs since the SDS began, this had remained relatively stable over the last few years. However, last year saw the percentage of dogs put to sleep increase from 2% in the 2022-23 report to 8% in the 2023-24 report. We estimated that this 6% increase could translate to an additional 1800 dogs being put to sleep by LAs across the UK. This year the proportion of dogs put to sleep increase again, now standing at 9%. It is not clear why the total number of dogs being put to sleep by LAs has increased in recent years, however, looking at the recorded reasons for euthanasia in the last two surveys, there has been a substantial increase in the proportion of dogs reported to be put to sleep in response to the Dangerous Dogs Act, or being a banned breed, compared to other reasons. This recent shift in reasons for euthanasia is likely at least in part due to the ban on XL bully-type dogs implemented by the UK government in December 2023, which may have also affected the overall numbers of dogs put to sleep.

Across the last three survey years, the profile of PTS reasons has shifted. In 2022-2023, ill health and behavioural issues accounted for similar proportions; however, since then, ill health has decreased while behaviour has overtaken it as the leading cause. Alongside this, euthanasia cases linked to the Dangerous Dogs Act or banned breeds have risen markedly, suggesting that recent legislative changes have had an impact on outcomes for dogs handled by LAs. Taken together with the slowing decline in the estimated number of dogs handled, the drop in reunification rates, and the increasing reliance on welfare organisations, these patterns point to a concerning direction of travel for the stray dog situation in the UK.



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