



COMPULSORY DOG AND CAT MICROCHIPPING

**10 YEARS ON
2026 REPORT**



FOREWORD



It is now a decade since it became compulsory in England, Scotland and Wales to microchip pet dogs and two years since the implementation of compulsory cat microchipping.

This is the seventh report Battersea has produced following our review of the impact of this legislation on stray animal numbers, on enforcement bodies and reunification of dogs and cats with their owners.

Accurate microchipping, which requires both the animal to be chipped and the keeper's up-to-date details to be registered on a DEFRA-compliant database, is the best way to ensure a pet can be returned to its owner if it becomes lost or stray. Battersea and other rescues receive a great number of strays each year, but microchipping enables us to reunite many dogs and cats with their owners, for example in 2025 we were able to reunite 227 pets – 197 dogs and 30 cats.

This report provides insight into the effectiveness of the law, how it is used and how it can be improved. Whilst it is positive that we are continuing to see a decline in the number of strays Local Authorities have to deal with, a trend that began before compulsory microchipping, we are continuing to see a reduction in the number of stray dogs with an accurate chip. Our latest research shows that only 13% of stray dogs are now microchipped – a significant reduction on the 30% in our 2017 report.

This reduction significantly impacts Local Authorities' and rescues centres' abilities to reunite pets with their owners. This, coupled with the shift we are seeing after the pandemic towards more pronounced behavioural and health issues, is increasing the resources required to care for these animals.

Our last report highlighted an impending UK Government consultation on microchipping. However, there has been no action yet despite announced reforms in March 2024. To ensure that microchipping is as effective as possible it is critical that DEFRA revisits this work and brings forward these changes as a priority. This should include measures to stop the proliferation of databases, create a single point of search, and ensure breeder information remains on the microchip record to enable full traceability of every animal.

It is not only for the Government to take action. We would encourage all dog and cat owners to ensure their pets are both microchipped and that their record is up-to-date.

Thank you very much for reading this report, which I hope you find helpful and informative.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Peter Laurie'.

Peter Laurie
Chief Executive
Battersea Dogs & Cats Home

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the 50 Local Authorities and their staff listed in Appendix 1 who so willingly agreed to participate in this survey of the microchip status of stray dogs. We would also like to thank the 253 Local Authorities in England that responded to our Freedom of Information Request relating to their use of the cat microchipping regulations.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is 10 years since microchipping of dogs became compulsory in England,¹ Scotland,² and Wales.³ Over that period, Battersea has been working with Local Authorities across the UK to regularly survey the microchip status of the stray dogs they collect, monitor and assess the effectiveness of the regulations in helping them reunite the dogs with their keepers. We have carried out seven surveys – in 2016 (before the Regulations were introduced), 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2023 and now 2026.

Over this 10-year period, our surveys have shown that the number of stray dogs collected by Local Authorities has greatly reduced. Although there was a rise in stray numbers following the Covid-19 lockdowns, this now seems to have subsided. The number of strays collected by Local Authorities in 2026 is less than half the number collected in 2016.

This is good news and shows the positive impact on animal welfare of microchipping.

Throughout this report, the term ‘microchipping’ or ‘microchipped’ refers to the full legal definition, i.e. an animal that has had a microchip implanted **and** has a full and up-to-date record on a DEFRA-compliant microchip database. Vets and others are able to identify and quickly reunite stray dogs with their keepers from the microchip, preventing the need for Local Authorities to get involved. Microchipping greatly increases the chances of a stray dog being reunited with its keeper. In 2026, 84% of stray dogs that were microchipped in full compliance with the regulations were reunited, compared with 19% for dogs that were not microchipped.

However, our surveys have also revealed that the system is falling short of its full potential. Significant and variant operational problems have affected the reliability of the databases, as keepers fail to register or update their details on a DEFRA-compliant database.⁴ The ability of Local Authorities to access records has also been compromised as the number of database operators has proliferated over the years to now 25 separate companies, with little oversight or enforcement of non-compliant database operators.

The result has been a diminishing proportion of stray dogs collected by Local Authorities being microchipped as the regulations require. **In 2017, the first year of compulsory microchipping in Great Britain, 31% of strays were microchipped in accordance with the regulations. Now, in 2026, just 13% of strays were microchipped,** the lowest rate since our survey began and lower even than before microchipping was compulsory when 16% were microchipped.

This may reflect in part that microchipped strays are being reunited by vets and others before they become Local Authority cases, leaving Local Authorities with the more difficult-to-reunite and therefore resource intensive dogs. Battersea research also highlights a perceived shift in the nature of the stray dog population, with some Local Authorities describing an increase in so-called ‘fake strays’ – dogs presented as strays following abandonment – and more strays with behavioural issues and complex medical needs.⁵ In this more challenging environment, it is more important than ever that the microchipping system works as efficiently and effectively as it can for Local Authorities.

1: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2015/9780111125243>

2: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2016/58/contents/made>

3: <http://gov.wales/docs/drah/publications/151127-microchipping-of-dogs-regulations-en.pdf>

4: <https://www.gov.uk/get-your-dog-cat-microchipped>

5: The report draws on qualitative research commissioned by Battersea in November 2024. The research comprised 15 in-depth interviews with 17 participants, including local authority staff (primarily animal welfare officers) and private kennel operators contracted by local authorities. Findings from this unpublished research are referenced throughout the report where relevant.

This 10-year period has also seen the introduction of compulsory cat microchipping in 2024 in England. This report includes the first major survey of all English Local Authorities and their use of the cat microchipping regulations. 99% responded that they do not provide a service for dealing with stray cats as they have no statutory responsibility to do so. This shows how little these regulations have impinged on Local Authorities as enforcement agents.

However, one area where microchipping has the potential to be of significant benefit for Local Authorities and cat owners is where deceased cats are found on the roadside. This is a significant council service. **150 councils collected 2,457 deceased cats in 2025** and this figure is likely to be much larger as many councils were unable to identify cats separately in their statistics from other deceased animals found on roadsides. Microchipping will help them contact keepers quickly, reuniting them with their loved ones and bringing closure in these sad cases. This would also bring cost savings to Local Authorities in reduced storage time for the body and disposal costs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2024, the then UK Government announced reforms to the microchipping system to tackle the problems and weaknesses identified in Battersea's surveys. These have yet to be implemented.

This and the new data in this report have led to three recommendations this year:

1. The current UK Government should implement in full and as a matter of urgency, the reforms to the microchipping system announced by the previous UK Government in 2024.⁶

These include:

- create a single point of search to *all DEFRA-compliant microchip databases* so approved users (vets, police, and local authorities) can quickly check microchip records without having to contact multiple databases
- database operators to send annual reminders to owners to verify and update their contact information

- provide current keepers 28 days to object to a transfer of ownership, to prevent stolen pets from being re-registered without the owner's knowledge
- ensure a dog's breeder details remain on the chip permanently to aid enforcement and improve traceability.

2. Along with the implementation of these reforms, the UK Government should, in partnership with the companion animal welfare sector, embark on a campaign to raise public awareness of the microchipping system and the benefits of compliance. Previous research shows that most dog owners do not know which database holds their record, do not know how to find out, and do not update the record because they don't know how to.⁷
3. It is ultimately the keeper's responsibility to ensure their dog is microchipped. Keepers must microchip their dog, register their details on a DEFRA-compliant database, and ensure these are kept up to date. This is a statutory duty and part of the responsibilities of every keeper.⁸

⁶: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/more-lost-pets-to-return-home-as-microchipping-system-reformed>

⁷: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s44338-026-00172-4>

⁸: Please note that the term 'keeper' is used rather than 'owner' as this is the term used in Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2015. It means the person with whom the dog normally resides. A dog's owner is usually its keeper, but not always.

1. BACKGROUND

DOG MICROCHIPPING

On 6 April 2016, microchipping of dogs became compulsory in England,⁹ Scotland,¹⁰ and Wales.¹¹ It has been compulsory in Northern Ireland since 9 April 2012.¹²

The regulations require that:

- every dog is implanted with a microchip and registered by the breeder prior to sale and by eight weeks old, unless exempted by a vet on health grounds. If breeders fail to comply, they can be prosecuted and fined up to £500
 - the current keeper's details are recorded on a DEFRA-compliant database. These are databases that meet Government requirements such as answering telephone and online requests at all times, backing up all data to a secure off-site facility every day, and maintaining records to demonstrate that they are complying with the requirements¹³
 - keepers of unchipped dogs comply with a notice, which can be issued by a Local Authority or the police, giving them 21 days to ensure the dog is chipped. Failure to comply with the notice is a criminal offence for which they can be fined up to £500.
- create a single point of search so approved users (vets, police, and Local Authorities) can quickly check microchip records without having to contact multiple databases
 - database operators to send annual reminders to owners to verify and update their contact information
 - provide current keepers 28 days to object to a transfer of ownership, to prevent stolen pets from being re-registered without the owner's knowledge
 - ensure a dog's breeder details remain on the chip permanently to aid enforcement and improve traceability.

These reforms have yet to be implemented.

Battersea has been conducting a survey with Local Authorities across the UK regularly since 2016 to assess the effectiveness of the microchipping legislation in helping Local Authorities carry out their statutory duties in relation to stray dogs. The last survey was conducted in 2023.

CAT MICROCHIPPING

On 10 June 2024, microchipping of all owned cats over 20 weeks of age became compulsory in England, unless exempted by a vet on health grounds.¹⁵ Local Authorities are identified in the legislation as enforcement agents, although they have no statutory duty in relation to cats as they do for stray dogs. This report includes an assessment of the extent to which they make use of and enforce the cat microchipping regulations.

9: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2015/9780111125243>

10: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2016/58/contents/made>

11: <http://gov.wales/docs/drah/publications/151127-microchipping-of-dogs-regulations-en.pdf>

12: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2011/9/section/2>

13: See appendix 2 for a full list of compliant databases and also <https://www.gov.uk/get-your-dog-cat-microchipped>

14: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/more-lost-pets-to-return-home-as-microchipping-system-reformed>

15: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/treasured-pets-now-safer-as-microchipping-for-cats-becomes-compulsory>



2. THE MICROCHIP STATUS OF STRAY DOGS 2026

50 Local Authorities across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland completed this 2026 Battersea survey of microchip compliance in the UK stray dog population.¹⁶ For every stray dog collected in March 2026, these Local Authorities recorded, as in previous years:

- whether it was implanted with a microchip,
- whether the microchip record was accurate,
- the nature of any inaccuracies,
- whether the dog was wearing a collar and tag with the owner's name and address, as this remains a legal requirement for most dogs in a public place.¹⁷

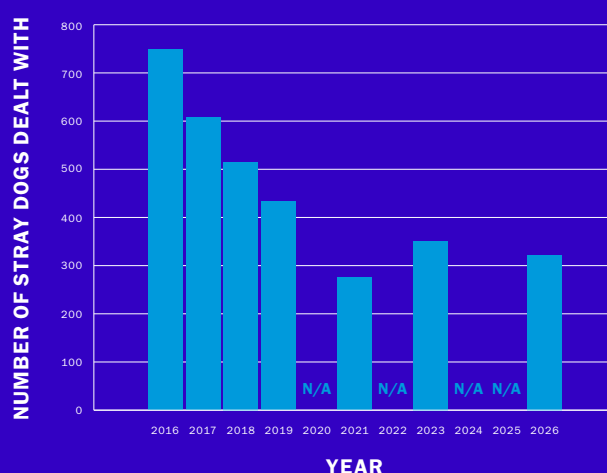
In total, 460 stray dogs were collected by these 50 Local Authorities in March 2026.

NUMBERS OF STRAY DOGS

30 of these Local Authorities have taken part in every one of the seven surveys we have conducted between 2016 and 2026. This allows us to track reliably the trend in the number of stray dogs collected over this 10-year period.

Figure 1 shows a 57% reduction in the number of strays collected by these Local Authorities over this period. The number of strays in 2026 is less than half the number in 2016. While 2023 saw an increase in strays, likely driven by the end of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns and the cost-of-living crisis, this upward trend now appears to have subsided.

Figure 1: Number of stray dogs collected by the 30 Local Authorities across the UK that participated in all seven Battersea surveys 2016-26¹⁸



This is a remarkable reduction and continues a downward trajectory since at least 1997.¹⁹ While a number of factors might explain this drop, including the introduction of tougher animal welfare laws, it is likely to be due at least in part to microchipping. Microchipping of pets was introduced in the UK in 1989 with the infrastructure and voluntary take-up building over the years until 2016 when it became compulsory in Great Britain.²⁰ This would have increasingly enabled vets, the police and welfare organisations to reunite stray dogs with their keepers without the need for Local Authority involvement.

¹⁶: See Appendix 1 for a full list of Local Authorities that took part in this 2026 survey

¹⁷: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1992/901/contents/made>

¹⁸: The survey was not carried in 2020, 2022, 2024 or 2025

¹⁹: <https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/about-us/research-expertise/stray-dogs-survey>

²⁰: <https://petscanner.com/index.php/2022/05/17/the-history-of-microchipping-animals>

HOW MANY STRAY DOGS CAN BE IDENTIFIED BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES ON THE BASIS OF THE MICROCHIP?

Just 13% of stray dogs collected by all the Local Authorities in Great Britain that took part in this survey in 2026 were microchipped as the regulations require, with an up-to-date record on a DEFRA-compliant database enabling the keeper to be identified and contacted. Also, just 2.6% of strays had a collar and tag with the correct information. Collar and tag is another legal requirement to identify the dog and its keeper. Nearly all (90%) of dogs wearing an accurate collar and tag were also microchipped.

This means that 87% of stray dogs handled by Local Authorities in Great Britain now cannot be easily and simply reunited with their keeper solely on the basis of the microchip (or the collar and tag), as the law requires them to be.

Failing to microchip a dog severely affects its chances of being reunited with its keeper. **Just 19% of non-microchipped dogs were reunited with their keepers compared with 84% of dogs that were microchipped in full compliance with the regulations.**

Dynamic duo Misty and Blue arrived at Battersea having been picked up as strays by the local dog warden. The loveable yet mischievous Rottweiler pair had seen their opportunity to take themselves out on an unaccompanied walk, by escaping via their owner's kitchen and absconding through a soon to be fixed hole in the garden fence.

Fortunately for the rambunctious duo, they were noticed wandering the streets unattended very quickly and were picked up by the dog warden not far from home, before making their way to Battersea's London centre. Thanks to their microchips, Battersea's skilled Dog Intake team were able to swiftly contact Misty and Blue's owner, even though only one of their chips had been properly registered to their owner.

After a night of separation, the family were happily reunited. Misty and Blue were overjoyed to see their owner and equally as delighted to see one another again. Owing to their large size, they had been placed in separate kennels during their short overnight stay at Battersea and they had obviously missed one another, as they greeted each other with playfulness and excitement the following day.

Misty and Blue were soon on their way back home with their relieved owner, hopefully never to repeat their great escape adventure again.

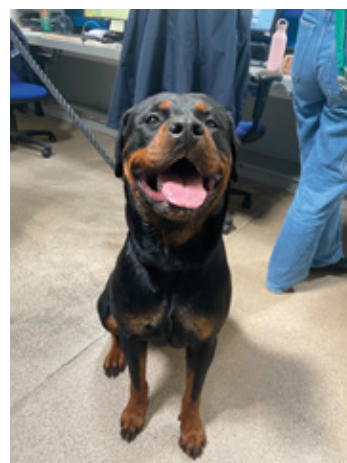
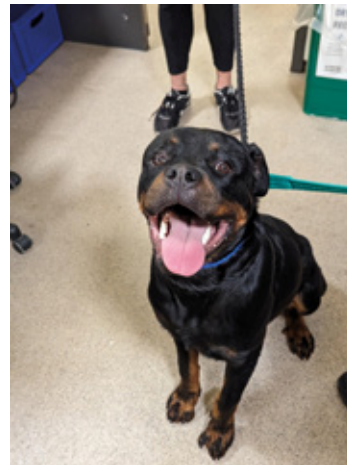


Figure 2 shows that this is the lowest microchipping rate in the Local Authority stray dog population since our survey began in 2016. It continues the downward trend from the peak of 31% in 2017, the first year after the regulations were introduced, and is now even lower than in 2016 before microchipping was compulsory.

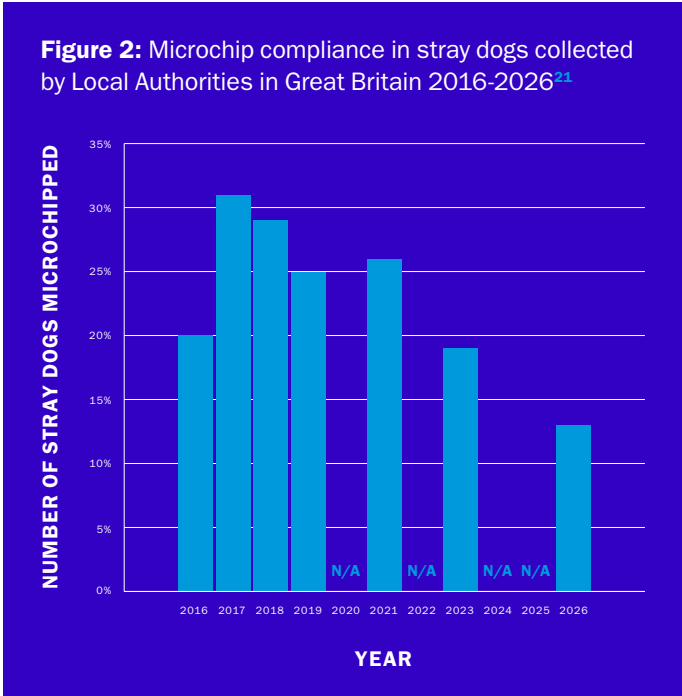
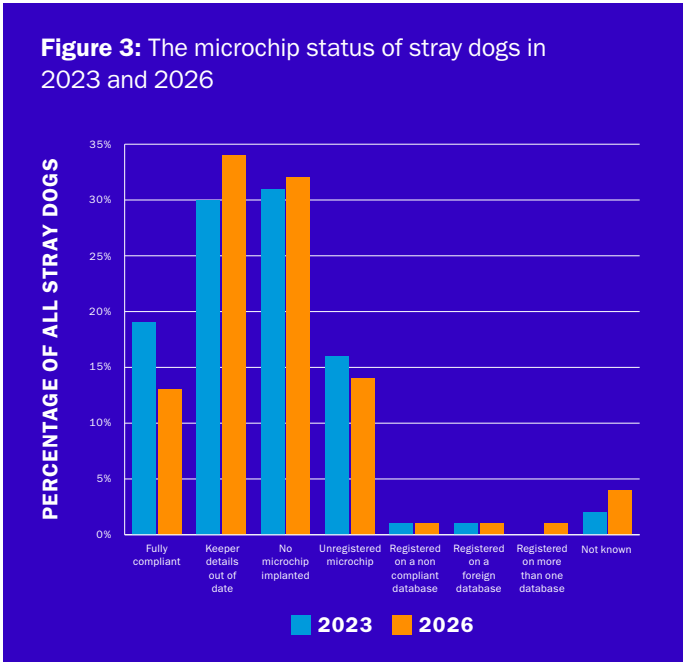


Figure 3 shows that, while there has been a small increase in the proportion of dogs that have not been implanted with a microchip, the main reason for the reduction in microchipped dogs is the growing degradation of the databases as keepers continue to fail to update it with their details. In 2023, 30% of strays had an out-of-date record on the databases. The figure is now 34%.



WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS?

The main reasons why dogs are not microchipped in 2026 are:

- the databases have not been updated with the current keeper details (34% of all strays)
- dogs have not been implanted with a microchip in the first place (32% of all strays)
- implanted microchips have not been registered on a compliant database (14% of all strays).

There are a number of reasons why keepers fail to update their dog’s record on the database. Confusion about how the system works is a key one. Research carried out in 2020 found that while most dog owners (83%) indicated they were aware of the legal requirement to microchip, 70% did not know that UK microchipping companies held separate private databases, 60% did not know which database held their record and 92% of these did not know how to find out. Of those who had not updated their record, 43% said it was due to forgetting but 57% said this was because they did not know how to.²²

²¹: The survey was not carried in 2020, 2022, 2024 or 2025
²²: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s44338-026-00172-4>

These findings indicate that, while fewer strays are coming to the attention of Local Authorities, they are now dealing with more difficult-to-reunite and more resource intensive dogs. Recent Battersea research also highlighted a perceived shift in the nature of the stray dog population, with some Local Authorities describing an increase in so-called ‘fake strays’- dogs presented as strays following abandonment, often as a route into the rescue system. They also described an increase in dogs with aggressive or destructive behavioural issues and with severe health problems. This is based on frontline perspectives rather than quantified data.²³ However, it does align with Battersea’s data which shows that the average length of stay of a dog at Battersea is now 38 days, up 9% from previous years, and indicative of the more challenging animals we are receiving at our centres.

“They’re not strays and I think this is where part of the issue is. Everyone refers to them as stray dogs but they’re abandonments dressed up as strays. I don’t think lost dogs have gone up or genuine stray dogs. What’s happened is the stray dog service is being used as a route to abandon dogs or to try and shortcut rescues. And that’s been happening for a couple of years now. And that’s why it’s not coping.”

A LOCAL AUTHORITY PARTICIPANT IN BATTERSEA’S STRAY DOGS SUPPORT PROGRAMME RESEARCH²⁴



“We have what we call COVID dogs. They’re not socialised with other dogs, they’re not socialised with people. So you’ve got nervousness. People can’t walk them. So then you’ve got behavioural problems.”

A LOCAL AUTHORITY PARTICIPANT IN BATTERSEA’S STRAY DOGS SUPPORT PROGRAMME RESEARCH²⁵

²³: The report draws on qualitative research commissioned by Battersea in November 2024. The research comprised 15 in-depth interviews with 17 participants, including local authority staff (primarily animal welfare officers) and private kennel operators contracted by local authorities. Findings from this unpublished research are referenced throughout the report where relevant.

²⁴: Battersea (2024) Stray Dogs Support Programme Research. Unpublished qualitative research commissioned by Battersea

²⁵: Battersea (2024) Stray Dogs Support Programme Research. Unpublished qualitative research commissioned by Battersea

3. LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND THE CAT MICROCHIPPING REGULATIONS

Since 10 June 2024, all owned cats in England over 20 weeks of age have been required by law to be microchipped unless exempted by a vet on health grounds.^{26 27} As for dogs, the duty to microchip is on keepers, details have to be recorded on a DEFRA-compliant database, and keepers found not to have microchipped their cat can be given 21 days to do so or face a fine of up to £500.

Local Authorities are designated in the regulations as enforcement agents for cat microchipping, with the powers to issue 21-day notices and enforce breaches of the regulations.²⁸

In April 2026, Battersea issued a Freedom of Information request to all Local Authorities in England, to assess the extent to which they use and enforce the cat microchipping regulations. The questions focused on the main service areas where contact with cats, and therefore use of the microchipping regulations was most likely – stray cats, deceased cats found on roadsides, and pet cats in social housing managed by the councils. Appendix 3 sets out the questions asked.

Table 1 summarises the responses provided by 253 councils, a response rate of 85%.

Table 1: Local Authorities’ (LAs) in England use of the cat microchipping regulations in 2025

	Total	No. LAs giving a nil response
The number of stray cats collected by Local Authorities in 2025	7	251 (99%)
The number of those stray cats that were accurately microchipped	2	251 (99%)
The number of deceased cats collected by Local Authorities in 2025	2,457	103 (41%)
The number of those deceased cats whose owners were identified from a microchip	231	148 (58%)
Number of Local Authorities that require tenants to microchip their pet cats	22	136 (54%)
The number of council tenants registered as owning a microchipped cat	7	250 (99%)
The number of 21-day enforcement notices issued by Local Authorities for failing to microchip a cat in 2025	15	250 (99%)

26: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/treasured-pets-now-safer-as-microchipping-for-cats-becomes-compulsory>

27: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2023/468/contents>

28: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-04-17/45500>

STRAY CATS

The vast majority of Local Authorities in England do not deal with stray cats as a matter of policy. 99% responded that, as they have no statutory responsibility for stray cats, they do not provide such a service. Anyone reporting a stray cat is referred to local vets or welfare charities. Just two councils said they had collected 7 stray cats and two of those cats were microchipped.

DECEASED CATS

Dealing with deceased cats found on roads and roadsides is a significant council service. 150 councils (59%) said they had collected 2,457 deceased cats in 2025. However, the figure is likely to be much larger as many councils were unable to identify cats separately in their statistics of deceased animals found on roads. For some councils, this is a very significant task – five councils each collected over 100 deceased cats with two of the largest metropolitan cities in the UK collecting over 200 deceased cats each in 2025.

Many councils send their deceased cats to local vets for scanning and contacting keepers, so do not know how many were microchipped. However, 105 councils were able to say that 231 of the 1,357 cats they had collected were microchipped, a rate of 17%.

CATS IN HOUSING

Most Local Authorities have transferred their housing stock to housing associations. This partly explains why only 22 councils (9%) said they had a policy that required social housing tenants to microchip a pet cat. Three of these had registered 7 tenants as having a microchipped cat in their home. However, 95 councils (37%) said that microchipping was not required as a condition for keeping a cat. While some said they were in the process of making it a requirement, others said that it was unnecessary as it was the law anyway and some that pets were banned in their housing.

ENFORCEMENT

Only three councils had issued any 21-day enforcement notices in 2025, together issuing 15 notices. These were mainly in relation to cats discovered in housing.

CONCLUSIONS

The cat microchipping regulations have impinged minimally on Local Authorities, even though they are designated enforcement agents. Councils do not deal with stray cats as they have no statutory duty to do so.

The main contact councils have with cats is, sadly, when they have been killed in road collisions. Some councils deal with quite large numbers of deceased cats found on roadsides. It is here where microchipping has a potential benefit for Local Authorities and owners, helping to identify owners quickly and bringing closure for them. There may even be some financial savings for Local Authorities if this reduces storage and disposal costs for the bodies. However, even here the benefits may be small as only 17% of deceased cats were microchipped and feedback from Local Authorities is that microchips can also sustain catastrophic damage in the collision.

Housing is another area where some Local Authorities have found benefits of microchipping. A few Local Authorities use and enforce the regulations in their housing pet policies as a means of ensuring the welfare of the animals in the care of their tenants, for example to help prevent abandonments and ensure the welfare of cats in a local area that are free-roaming. However, this is a rare use of the regulations. Nearly half of councils have now transferred all or some of their stock to housing associations, and for those that retain stock, most do not include or enforce the cat microchipping regulations in pet policies.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ten years ago, in 2016, microchipping of dogs in Great Britain became a legal requirement. Over this period, Battersea has worked with a panel of 50 Local Authorities across the UK, regularly surveying the microchip status of the stray dogs they collect to monitor and assess the effectiveness of the regulations in helping them reunite these dogs with their keepers. We have carried out seven surveys – in 2016 (before the Regulations came into force), 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2023 and now 2026. The findings contributed to the UK Government's five-year review of the legislation in 2021 and provided evidence for the subsequent reforms of the system announced in 2024.

The survey has revealed the positive impact on animal welfare of microchipping. Since 2016, there has been a remarkable reduction of 57% in stray dog numbers collected by Local Authorities. This continues a downward trend in strays collected by Local Authorities since 1997 and will be due at least in part to microchipping, available in the UK since 1989 many years before it was made compulsory, enabling vets, police and others to easily and quickly reunite stray dogs before they come to the attention of Local Authorities. Our research has also shown that microchipping greatly increases a dog's chances of being reunited with its keeper. In 2026, 84% of stray dogs that were microchipped in full compliance with the regulations were reunited. This compares with 19% for dogs that were not microchipped.

However, our survey has also revealed problems with the system that have meant that it is failing to reach its full potential, particularly for Local Authorities who now increasingly have to deal with more difficult-to-reunite and resource intensive dogs. These problems focus around two key operational issues – database records becoming increasingly out-of-date as keepers fail to register and update their details on a DEFRA-compliant database, and difficulties accessing records in a system that now comprises 25 different and separate microchip companies and databases. This causes delays in reuniting animals, increases costs for Local Authorities, and compromises enforcement effort.

The consequence is that Local Authorities find themselves dealing with a decreasing proportion of stray dogs that are microchipped as the regulations require. In the first year of compulsory microchipping in 2017, 31% of strays were microchipped compared with 16% in the year before it became a legal requirement. Since then, this rate has dropped year on year. By 2023, just 19% of strays were microchipped and that figure in 2026 is now 13%. The legal requirement for dogs to wear a collar and tag with the owner's name and address is little help as just 2.6% of strays were compliant with this law and nearly all of these were also microchipped.

2024 also saw the introduction of compulsory cat microchipping in England. Our survey of all English Local Authorities reveals how little these regulations have impinged on them as enforcement agents. However, one area where microchipping has the potential to be of significant benefit to Local Authorities and owners is deceased cats killed on roads. Sadly, Local Authorities collect thousands of deceased cats every year. Microchipping will help keepers to be reunited with their loved ones, bring closure for them and financial savings for the Local Authority in reduced costs for storing and disposal of the body.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We have three recommendations to make in this report on the 10th anniversary of compulsory microchipping in Great Britain:

1. The current UK Government should implement in full and as a matter of urgency, the reforms to the microchipping system announced by the previous UK Government in 2024. These include:
 - a single point of search to *all DEFRA-compliant microchip databases* so approved users (vets, police, and local authorities) can quickly check microchip records without having to contact multiple databases
 - database operators to send annual reminders to owners to verify and update their contact information
 - provide current keepers 28 days to object to a transfer of ownership, to prevent stolen pets from being re-registered without the owner's knowledge
 - ensure a dog's breeder details remain on the chip permanently to aid enforcement and improve traceability.
2. Along with the implementation of these reforms, the UK Government should, in partnership with the companion animal welfare sector, embark on a campaign to raise public awareness of the microchipping system, as recommended in Nottingham University's research for the UK Government's review. The research found that while most dog owners (83%) indicated they were aware of the legal requirement to microchip, 60% did not know which database held their record and 92% of these did not know how to find out. 57% of people who had not updated their details on the database said this was because they did not know how to.²⁹
3. It is ultimately the keeper's responsibility to ensure their dog is microchipped. Keepers must ensure their dog is microchipped, registered on a DEFRA-compliant database, and its details are up to date. This is a statutory duty and part of the responsibilities of every keeper.³⁰

²⁹: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s44338-026-00172-4>

³⁰: Please note that the term 'keeper' is used rather than 'owner' as this is the term used in Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2015. It means the person with whom the dog normally resides. A dog's owner is usually its keeper, but not always.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1

THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES THAT PARTICIPATED IN THE BATTERSEA STRAY DOG MICROCHIPPING SURVEY 2026

- Aberdeen
- Barking & Dagenham
- Barnet*
- Basildon*
- Basingstoke & Deane*
- Bassetlaw
- Belfast*
- Birmingham*
- Bradford
- Brent
- Brighton & Hove*
- Broxbourne*
- Cardiff*
- Coventry*
- Croydon*
- Durham*
- East Hampshire
- Eastleigh*
- Enfield
- Fareham
- Gosport
- Harrogate (North Yorkshire)*
- Havant
- Hillingdon
- Hounslow*
- Hull*
- Isle of Wight*
- Islington*
- Lambeth*
- Lewisham*
- New Forest
- Newham*
- North Lincolnshire*
- Northumberland*
- Reading
- Reigate & Banstead
- Richmond (London)
- Rushmoor*
- Sandwell
- Sheffield
- Southampton*
- Southend on Sea*
- Stockton on Tees*
- Swindon
- Test Valley*
- Waltham Forest
- Wandsworth*
- West Lancashire*
- Westminster
- Winchester*

*Local Authorities that have participated in all Battersea's microchipping surveys (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2023 and 2026).



APPENDIX 2

LIST OF DEFRA-COMPLIANT MICROCHIP DATABASES

The conditions placed on microchip databases in order to be listed as a DEFRA-compliant database include:

- To maintain records to demonstrate that they are complying with the requirements,
- Answer telephone and online requests at all times,
- Back up all data to a secure off-site facility every day.

The full details of the requirements can be found here:

- England – <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2023/468/regulation/7>
- Wales – <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2015/1990/made>
- Scotland – <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2016/58/contents/made>

The compliant microchip databases are:

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| ▪ AnimalData | ▪ MicroChip Central |
| ▪ Animal Microchips | ▪ My Animal Trace |
| ▪ Animal Tracker | ▪ MyPet |
| ▪ ChipHERO | ▪ National Veterinary Data Service |
| ▪ Chipped Monkey | ▪ Pet Database |
| ▪ Chipworks | ▪ Pet Identity UK |
| ▪ DKC | ▪ Petlog |
| ▪ FidoID | ▪ PetScanner |
| ▪ Greyhound Chip ID (racing greyhounds only) | ▪ ProtectedPet |
| ▪ HomeAgain | ▪ SmartTrace |
| ▪ Identibase | ▪ Track Your Paws |
| ▪ Lost Paws | ▪ UK PETtrac Microchip Database |
| | ▪ We Trace Pets |

This list was taken from <https://www.gov.uk/get-your-dog-microchipped> on 8 June 2026. Although this list is provided on the UK Government website, it is used by all the devolved nations.



APPENDIX 3

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST TO ALL LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN ENGLAND

- 1.** Number of stray cats collected in the calendar year 2025
- 2.** Number of those stray cats that were microchipped in accordance with the regulations
- 3.** Number of deceased cats collected in the calendar year 2025
- 4.** Number of those deceased cats whose owners were identified from a microchip
- 5.** The number of cats handed over to the Authority for rescue and rehoming in 2025
- 6.** Are council tenants required to microchip their pet cats as part of their tenancy agreement? Y/N
- 7.** Number of council tenants currently registered as owning a microchipped cat
- 8.** Number of 21-day enforcement notices issued for failing to microchip a cat in 2025



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BATTERSEA

HERE FOR EVERY DOG AND CAT

FURTHER INFORMATION

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Battersea Dogs & Cats Home is a registered charity no. 206394