

Dog enforcement survey results

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and APSE Contacts in Scotland, England, Northern Ireland and Wales

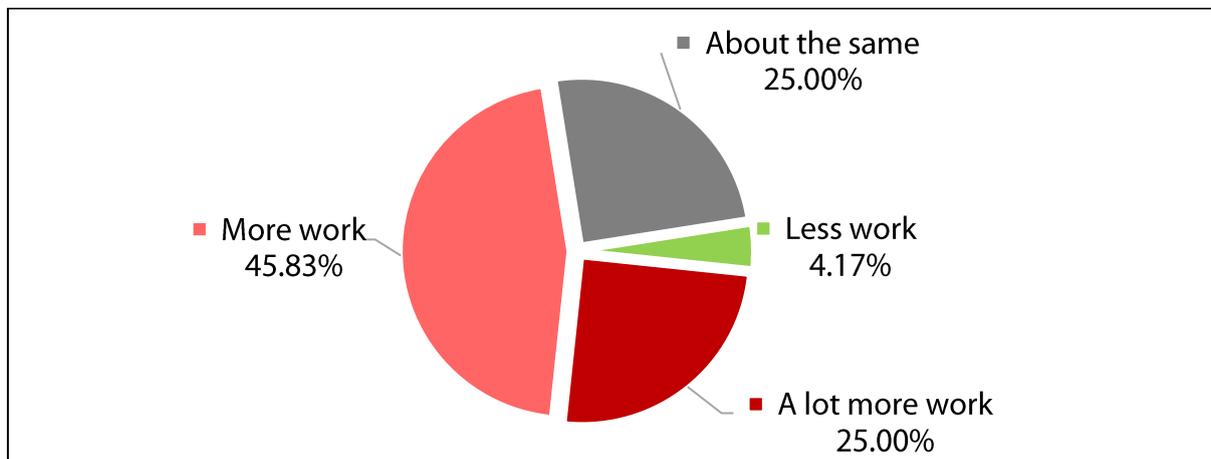
1 Executive Summary

APSE was asked to put together a survey by a member council to find out how local authorities are managing to deliver on dog enforcement duties with the significant rise in pet ownership that has taken place during the pandemic, in particular with any issues around an increase in attacks / complaints relating to dog ownership.

24 local authorities responded and the results are summarised below.

2 Survey results

In your experience, how has it been to carry out dog enforcement activities over the last year?

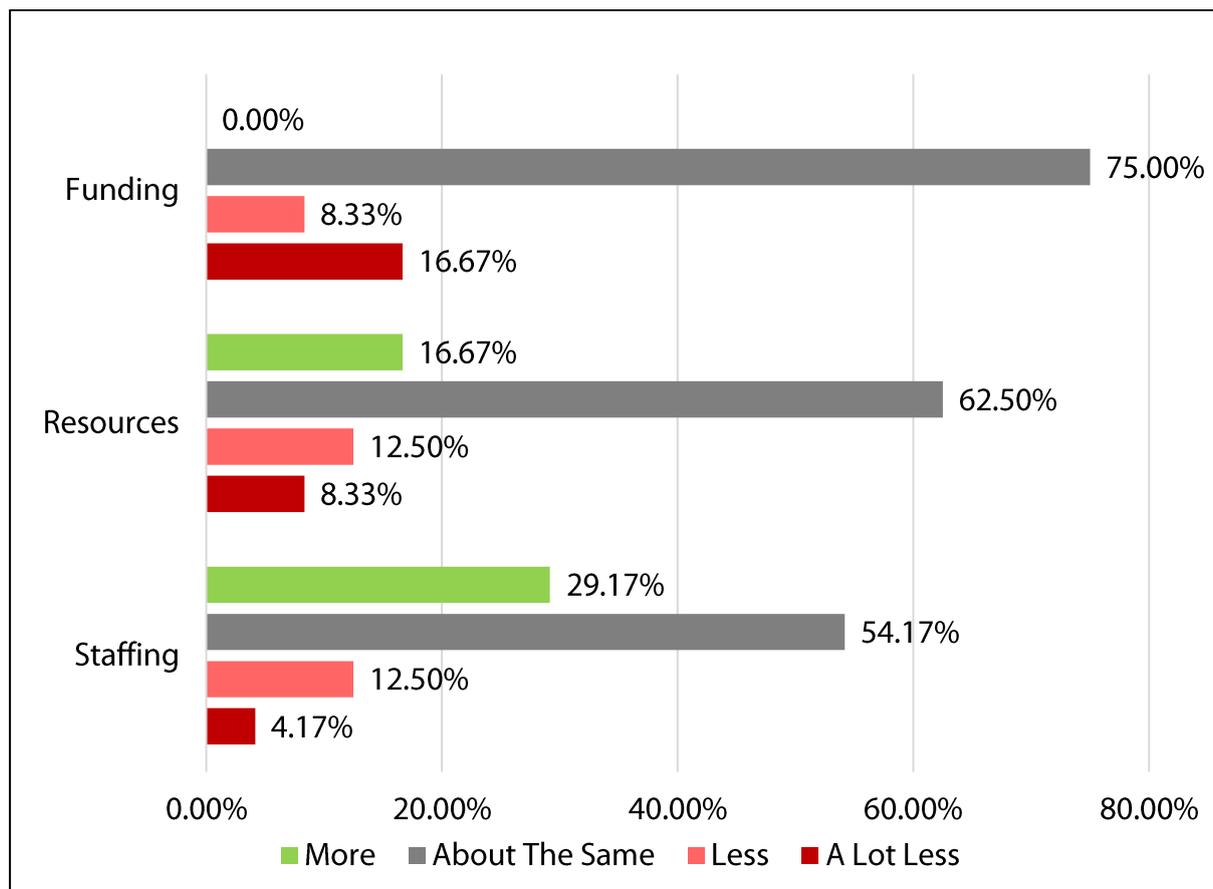


The majority of survey respondents felt that dog enforcement activities over the last year were either 'more work' or 'a lot more work' (70.83%), with 25.00% stating that it was 'about the same' and only 4.17% felt that it was 'less work'.

Comments to this question from respondents stated that there was "a rise in dog attacks on people and other pets which involved increased investigation and resources"; another authority said that

they were “finding that the cases that are being reported are a lot more severe” with “larger protective breeds being sold to inexperienced owners”. One authority reported an increase in dog barking incidents and anti-social dog incidents”. Others were experiencing escalations in dog fouling complaints, an increased number of strays and a reduction in the percentage of dogs reclaimed from kennels.

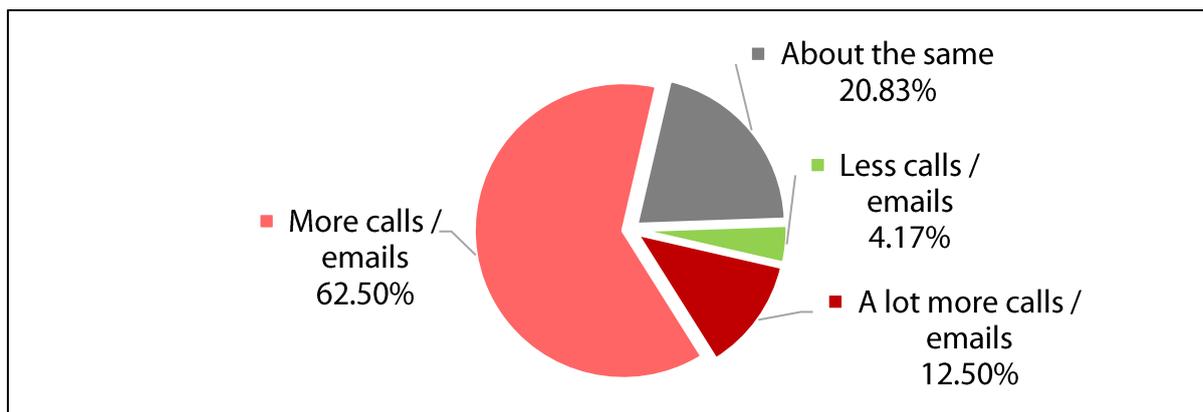
Comparing your service right now to the time period immediately before the beginning of the pandemic, do you have less, about the same or more staffing, resources and funding?



With regards to funding, 75.00% had about the same, 8.33% had less and 16.67% had a lot less; resources wise, 16.67% had more, 62.50% had about the same, 12.50% had less and 8.33% had a lot less; and finally with regards to staffing, 29.17% had more, 54.17% had about the same, 12.50% had less and 4.17% had a lot less. One authority commented that they only had 2 dog wardens to cover the district with a population of 290,000; another commented that while they have sufficient resources and knowledge, they did not have the staff to be proactive and carry out investigations.

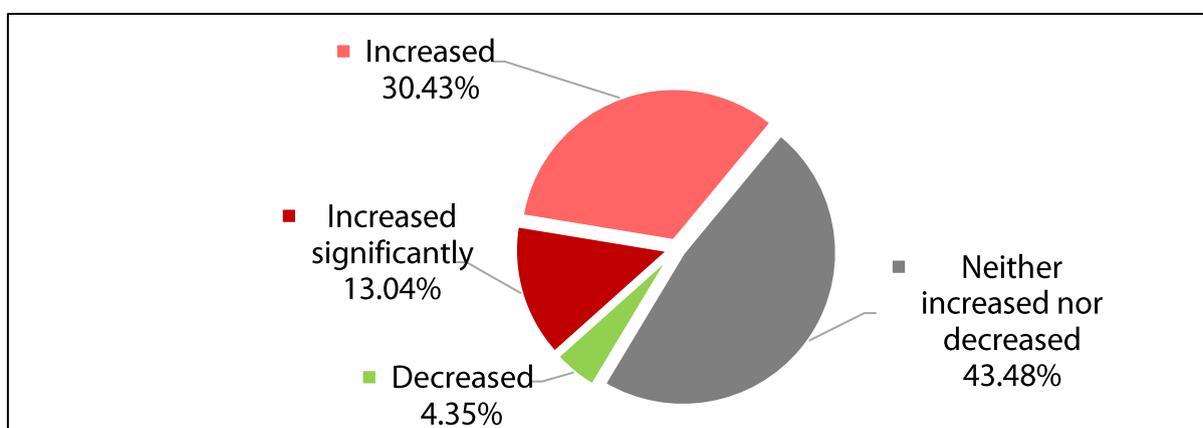
Thinking about the period pre-pandemic to the current time, have you seen any change in the

volume of calls and email enquiries to the council about aggressive dog behaviour?



75% of respondents either had 'more calls / emails' (62.50%) or 'a lot more calls / emails' (12.50%); 20.83% had 'about the same' and 4.17% had 'less calls / emails'. Responding councils felt there were more general dog enquiries as well as dog nuisance enquiries, and another felt that there was simply an increased perception of aggressive dogs because of the number of dogs has increased since the pandemic.

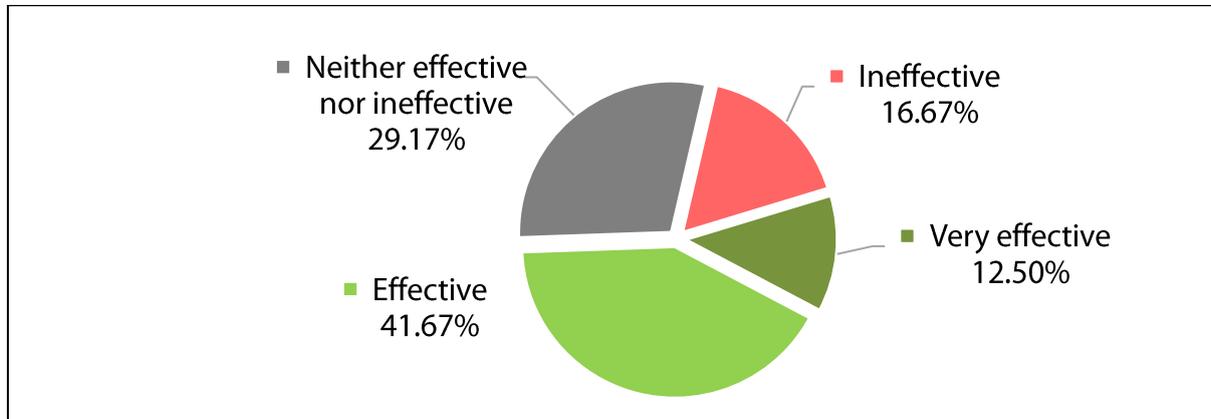
Thinking about the time pre-pandemic, have you seen any change in illegal and/or unregulated dog breeding incidents in the area in the last several years?



43.47% answered 'increased' (30.43%) or 'increased significantly' (13.04%) when asked whether they had seen any change in illegal and/or unregulated dog breeding incidents in their area over the last several years; 43.48% said it had neither increased nor decreased and 4.35% said it had decreased. One local authority commented to say that while they have had an increased amount of calls and emails related to illegal breeding, more breeders have come forward to be licensed. A responding authority felt that there was an increase in members of the public reporting that they have received animals in poor health. Another authority is currently running a campaign to address unlicensed

dog breeders.

What do you think of the effectiveness of the powers local authorities possess related to the control of dogs?



54.17% felt that the powers local authorities possess related to the control of dogs were either effective (41.67%) or very effective (12.50%), 29.17% felt they were neither effective nor ineffective, and 16.67% felt they were ineffective.

There were many suggestions for how respondents would change powers or what powers they would add to make the control of dogs more effective that included:

- More enforcement powers for dog-on-dog attacks
- Implementing Public Space Protection Orders in their authority such as dogs on leads and against dogs in children’s play areas
- More funding for staffing resources
- More support for dealing with dangerous dogs with the police, and more joint working with the police
- Tightening up legislation in areas such as the ownership of certain breeds and licensing
- Increase in publicity around microchipping
- Substantial fixed penalties for dog attacks on people and pets rather than prosecution where the fines may not reflect the offence
- Re-introduction of the dog licence as either a significant one-off cost or an annual fee

Can you please provide detail on your enforcement activities now compared to the time before the pandemic? What (if anything) has changed?

Responding authorities has a range of different experiences with enforcement activities now compared to the pandemic:

- No direct enforcement service
- Less repeat offenders since the introduction of the Anti-Social Crime & Policing Act 2014 legislation
- A sharp increase in dog fouling and litter reports
- More cases being passed by the police
- Improved working relationship with Police Scotland
- Increased joint working with the Police Dog Legislation team and more joined up working when enforcing landlord pet policies
- Dog wardens are dealing with more calls relating to dogs not under control
- Increases in the number of stray dogs at kennels with 48% not claimed by owners in 2022
- General workload increased with the increase in the number of dogs
- Environmental crime has increased in other areas, so staff have been unable to spend as much time working on dog enforcement
- Reporting of dog-on-dog attacks has increased, but stray dogs in this authority have decreased
- Spending more time dealing with licensable activities and far less time on non-statutory work such as patrolling and fouling investigation
- Increase in the number of dog-on-dog attacks and barking complaints
- Increased use of Community Protection Notices and Criminal Behaviour Orders
- Less enforcement carried out
- Has the relevant resources in place to enforce Environmental Crime but they do not have the staff to carry out the enforcement and investigations
- Finally, for several authorities nothing had changed with the enforcement activities due to the pandemic

Which organisations or groups do you currently report to or share information through about dog enforcement activities?

Respondents report to and share information with a wide range of organisations and groups including the police, other local authorities, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), Scottish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA), The Dogs Trust, Battersea Dogs & Cats Home, the Northern Ireland Dog Advisory Group, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Keep Scotland Beautiful, Veterinary Organisations, Local Charities for rehoming, and colleagues within different local authority departments such as housing.

Have you implemented or seen others implement any best practice related to dog enforcement that you would like to share?

Some of the respondents shared best practice related to dog enforcement, this included:

- A Public Spaces Protection Order to ensure that:
 - You must clean up after your dog
 - You must have the means to clean up after your dog
 - You must put and keep your dog on a lead if asked by an authorised officer
 - You must not be in charge of more than four dogs
 - You must not let your dog enter sports pitches or enclosed play areas
- Changing the messaging and signage addressed to dog walkers promoting positive language and pro-dog messaging rather than the previously used 'threatening' or 'warning' rhetoric
- Introducing Cemetery Management Rules to address dogs running free within cemeteries
- Having high profile patrols targeting smaller areas for a period of time
- Considering the use of remote CCTV in hot spot areas of fouling offences
- Completely reviewing reporting platforms to collect better information e.g. asking for approximate times of offending to identify timeframes to carry out patrols
- A single point of contact to data-share community protection notices with the police

3 APSE Comment

The results show that responding local authorities are generally dealing with increased workloads, increased calls and email enquiries, and increased or similar amounts of illegal and unregulated dog breeding with the majority having the same amounts of funding, resources and staffing as they had before the pandemic. However, no two local authorities seemed to be experiencing the same kinds of demands on their services, and were differently resourced and structured, with different parts of the council dealing with enforcement processes. While the majority of respondents felt that local authority powers were effective (54.17%), there was still an appetite for increased enforcement powers around dealing with dangerous dogs and increasing the penalties associated with dog attacks.

In addition to the best practice outlined in the final section of the survey responses, APSE has published several briefings over the years on local authority best practice around dog fouling ([16/31](#)) and potential solutions from other local authorities ([19/41](#)). APSE's advisory groups offer an opportunity to discuss issues with colleagues and are free to attend for APSE members.

More information on future meetings can be found at:

<https://apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/members-area/advisory-groups/>.

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Sign up for APSE membership to enjoy a whole range of benefits

APSE member authorities have access to a range of membership resources to assist in delivering council services. This includes our regular advisory groups, specifically designed to bring together elected members, directors, managers and heads of service, together with trade union representatives to discuss service specific issues, innovation and new ways of delivering continuous improvement. The advisory groups are an excellent forum for sharing ideas and discussing topical service issues with colleagues from other councils throughout the UK.

Advisory groups are a free service included as part of your authority's membership of APSE and all end with an informal lunch to facilitate networking with peers in other councils. If you do not currently receive details about APSE advisory group meetings and would like to be added to our list of contacts for your service area please email enquiries@apse.org.uk.

Our national advisory groups include:-

- FM and Building cleaning
- Catering (School Meals)
- Cemeteries and Crematoria
- Cost of Providing/Cost of Living Network
- Highways and Street Lighting
- Housing, Construction and Building Maintenance
- Local Authority Commercialisation, Income and Trading Network
- Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance
- Recovery and Renewal
- Renewables and Climate Change
- Roads, highways and street lighting
- Sports and Leisure Management
- Vehicle Maintenance and Transport
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