

# Pet abduction to be made new criminal offence in crackdown on pet theft

- Pet Theft Taskforce delivers report with recommendations to tackle reported rise of pet theft
- Government working with the police to improve recording and tracking of pet abduction cases
- Improvements to pet microchipping processes to support the identification of lost and stolen dogs

A new criminal offence for pet abduction is set to be introduced under government plans to crack down on pet theft following a reported rise in pets being stolen during the pandemic. The new law will recognise the welfare of animals and that pets are valued as more than property.

The new offence is one of several recommendations in a [report published today](#) by the Government's [Pet Theft Taskforce](#) which was launched in May 2021. The Taskforce, made up of officials from Defra, the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice along with operational partners including the police CPS, Border Force and Local Government, considered evidence from academics, animal welfare organisations, campaign groups, enforcement agencies and industry experts.

Since its establishment, the Taskforce has considered available evidence from academics, animal welfare organisations, campaign groups, enforcement agencies and industry experts to help inform its recommendations.

The report found that seven in 10 of the animal thefts recorded by the police involve dogs. Evidence suggests that around 2,000 dog theft crimes were reported to police in 2020, causing considerable distress for owners and their pets alike. The price of some breeds increased by as much as 89% over lockdown as people spent more time at home, potentially making dog theft more appealing to criminals looking to profit from the spike in public interest in owning a pet.

The Taskforce's recommendations include:

- **The creation of a new 'pet abduction' offence:**

Pet theft is currently treated as a loss of property to the owner, but we know that does not reflect the true severity of this crime. The new offence will prioritise the welfare of our pets as sentient beings and recognise the emotional distress to the animal in addition to its owner.

- **Identifying and tracking cases:**

Reliable data on pet theft is limited and improved recording and data collection about these crimes will build a stronger evidence base about

the problem.

- **Improving the recording of ownership and transfer data:**

New requirements to register additional details and a single point of access to microchipping databases will support tracking lost and stolen dogs.

- **Tackling the fear of crime:**

Police will work together with partner agencies to raise awareness about police initiatives and prevention measures

These changes will make it easier for the police to track pet abduction incidents making it easier to clamp down on offenders. The Home Office will ensure that pet abduction is recorded in a consistent manner across police forces, while officials from each department will be able to review the way data is collected across the criminal justice system.

Pet microchip databases will also be made more accessible under the proposals. There are currently 16 microchipping databases in England, however the Taskforce found that they can be difficult to navigate for pet owners and law enforcement, making it difficult to trace stolen dogs. Under the new proposals a single point of access to all databases will simplify and streamline the system and more robust rules will also be introduced across all of the pet microchipping databases for recording the transfer of dogs to new owners to ensure full traceability.

Taken together, these proposals will make it far harder for thieves to steal and sell pets, will make it easier for the police to catch them, and will ensure that the impact on the animal is reflected in the sentences or penalties given to offenders.

The new measures will also allow the Government to capture more data on pet theft crimes and raise awareness of police activity in combatting the issue and actions owners can take to keep their pets safe.

### **Environment Secretary George Eustice said:**

Pets are much loved members of the family in households up and down the country, and reports of a rise in pet theft have been worrying. Pet owners shouldn't have to live in fear, and I am pleased this report acknowledges the unique distress caused by this crime.

Its recommendations will reassure pet owners, help the police to tackle pet theft, and deliver justice for victims. We will consider its findings carefully and work with colleagues across Government to start implementing its recommendations.

**The Lord Chancellor, Robert Buckland QC MP, said:**

Many of us have sought the companionship of pets during the pandemic which makes this crime even more cruel.

These proposals will make sure police can better identify and track down criminals who peddle in this heartless trade, whilst ensuring they are appropriately punished for their actions.

**Home Secretary Priti Patel said:**

Stealing a pet is an awful crime which can cause families great emotional distress whilst callous criminals line their pockets.

The new offence of pet abduction acknowledges that animals are far more than just property and will give police an additional tool to bring these sickening individuals to justice.

At the same time, police will continue to work to raise awareness about how owners can best to protect pets from being targeted.

**Taskforce partner, Deputy Chief Constable Amanda Blakeman said:**

The work of the taskforce means that police forces across the country will now be better placed to respond to pet theft through an improved recording process and a specific crime that recognises pets as valued members of the family with a significant emotional impact".

We would also encourage anyone buying a puppy or dog to make sure that they are buying from a responsible and genuine home. Advice on checks that can help buyers make the right choices is available through Blue Cross or RSPCA website.

**RSPCA chief executive Chris Sherwood said:**

We're really pleased to hear the Government's Pet Theft Taskforce recommendations. Pet theft can leave families in utter turmoil and have serious welfare implications for animals ripped away from everything they know.

The new Pet Abduction Offence will acknowledge the seriousness of this crime and we hope this will encourage courts to hand out much tougher sentences to pet thieves. We're also thrilled that the Government wants to simplify the microchipping database system and we believe this will help to tackle pet theft as well as other

animal welfare issues and irresponsible pet ownership generally.

The police advise that dog owners should avoid leaving their pet unattended while out in public, vary their routines when walking their dogs and should take basic security steps at home such as checking locks on doors and garden gates. The Blue Cross has also published detailed [guidance](#) for pet owners on how they can protect their animals from theft.

The Taskforce's recommendations are part of the Government's commitment to further strengthening the UK's position as a global leader in animal welfare standards, as outlined in the [Action Plan for Animal Welfare](#), and follow Defra's recent announcement of new measures to crack down on the [illegal smuggling of dogs and puppies](#).

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## [LGBT rights sailor rewarded for championing diversity in maritime](#)

- 16 mariners recognised with Merchant Navy Medals
- first ever LGBT+ champion awarded for establishing Pride in Maritime network
- other recipients include first ever female captain in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary's 116 year history

Two trailblazing activists promoting the rights of women and LGBT+ members in the maritime community have today (3 September 2021) been recognised for their achievements.

Second Officer Paul Owen is the first ever recipient of the prestigious Merchant Navy Medal for his efforts in promoting LGBT+ rights across the maritime sector.

[Paul, from Blackpool, is joined by 15 other mariners awarded for outstanding service and contribution to the sector](#), including services for seafarer welfare during the COVID-19 pandemic, safety and security standards and training.

Throughout his career, Paul has championed minority groups rights, particularly for women and LGBT+. Spurred from personal experiences of bullying and discrimination, Paul assisted in the establishment of the first ever Pride in Maritime, part of Maritime UK's Diversity in Maritime programme, with the backing of UK government. The initiative today is a space for over 400 members and leads on campaigns to help identify barriers to change across the whole maritime sector, and to educate and enable individuals and companies to embrace, empower and support the LGBT+

community.

Another recipient is Captain Susan Cloggie-Holden, from Seamill, who is the first women to reach the rank of captain in the RFA's 116-year history and has received a Merchant Navy Medal for her tireless work to encourage, promote and support women in maritime. A founding member of the Women in Maritime Taskforce, the forum boasts over 700 members, with Susan recently assuming the role of vice-chair.

Robert Courts, Maritime Minister said:

Every year I am humbled by the dedication of these sailors, captains and mariners who consistently go above and beyond the call of duty to protect and enrich the sector and our country.

I'm delighted to see Paul and Susan rewarded for their outstanding service; diversity is vital for the success of any sector and the extraordinary work they do on a daily basis not only makes maritime a welcoming career path for everyone but improves the lives of those already in the workforce.

The Merchant Navy Medal celebrates exemplary service and devotion to duty shown by Merchant Navy seafarers while recognising the contribution they continue to make to our country.

Second Officer Paul Owen said:

I am deeply humbled and surprised to receive this honour. I have played a small part in the Diversity in Maritime initiative whilst seconded to Maritime UK but it has broadened my knowledge of the diversity issues faced in the maritime sector through involvement in the 4 aspects of the programme (ethnicity, pride, women and mental health).

Having suffered a degree of bullying early in my career because I identify as LGBT+ I made the conscious decision to offer support to fellow seafarers who were experiencing difficulties because of their sexuality. This has been on an informal basis through social media and company forums but going forward I will be appointed as the Royal Fleet Auxiliaries LGBT+ Champion when I return to the RFA this autumn.

Captain Cloggie-Holden said:

I'm honoured to be awarded this prestigious medal alongside some truly inspirational seafarers. To reach the rank of captain has been my career ambition and I now feel it is my duty to help others

to reach their goals. I believe diversity is key to this, as an inclusive and diverse working environment ensures everyone is equal and enables them to reach their potential.

The UK government is dedicated to ensuring an inclusive workforce in the maritime sector. Launched in 2019, the [Maritime 2050 people route map](#) sets out how the government and industry will work together to diversify workforce over the coming decades.

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## [UK and Australia agree to share vaccines to tackle global pandemic](#)

- Next batch of more than 2 million UK doses delivered to vulnerable countries across Africa and Asia through COVAX
- Almost 9 in 10 over 16s in the UK have now received their first COVID-19 jab, and sharing will have no impact on UK rollout or any future booster programme

The UK and Australia will share COVID-19 vaccine doses to benefit each other's life-saving vaccine rollout programmes, the government has announced today.

The UK will send 4 million Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines to Australia to rapidly enhance their vaccination programme, with the first batch of 292,000 doses due to be shipped shortly. Australia will return the same overall volume of doses before the end of the year.

This arrangement is mutually beneficial and will ensure these Pfizer/BioNTech doses – which are not immediately required in the UK – are used to support international vaccination efforts. Sharing doses will mean Australia has access to vaccines they can put to use in their domestic campaign immediately and will enable the UK to better align timings of our own supply of vaccines with our future need – including for any booster programme or expansion of vaccines to teenagers, pending final advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

Thanks to the early work of the Vaccine Taskforce, the UK has ensured sufficient vaccine supplies for its domestic rollout and supported the global recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic by improving access to vaccines.

Nearly 9 in 10 over 16s in the UK have received their first dose and over three-quarters have had both jabs. The government is confident in its vaccine supply and there will be no impact on the UK's ongoing COVID-19 vaccine rollout or any future booster programmes.

This agreement comes as the UK announces the latest batch of its Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines have been delivered through COVAX – the international scheme designed to ensure vaccines are available for poorer countries around the world. In total, over 9 million COVID-19 vaccines from the UK have now been sent to developing nations across Africa and Asia.

The COVAX doses are part of the 100 million vaccines the Prime Minister pledged the UK would share over the following year at June's G7 in Cornwall, with 30 million due to be sent by the end of the year.

More than 592,000 doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine were delivered to Nigeria on 26 August, and COVAX is scheduled to transport more than a million doses to Pakistan, 499,000 doses to Ethiopia and 105,000 doses to Niger.

Health and Social Care Secretary, Sajid Javid said:

Vaccines have built a strong wall of defence in the UK and we want to support nations around the world in recovering from COVID-19 and improving access to vaccines.

Our agreement with Australia will share doses at the optimum time to bolster both our countries' vaccination programmes.

By working with international partners to coordinate the rollout of life-saving vaccines, we will protect more people from this awful virus and save lives.

Last month, the UK delivered 3 million vaccines through COVAX to 11 African countries including Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda and Zambia – as well as sending 4 million directly to countries in need including Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Cambodia, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Thailand and Vietnam.

Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab said:

The UK is donating vaccines to help protect more than 2 million of the most vulnerable people across Pakistan, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Niger, as part of the 100 million doses we've pledged to share with the world.

The UK continues to lead the global response to the pandemic because nobody is safe until everyone is safe. At least 80 million of the 100 million doses the UK will share will go to COVAX, with

the rest going to countries directly. The donations will help meet the pledge that G7 leaders made to vaccinate the world.

- The doses going to Australia are not part of the commitment to send 100 million vaccines overseas.
- The UK has led the international response to COVID-19, including through kick-starting efforts to establish COVAX in 2020 and providing £548 million to fund vaccines for lower income countries through the scheme. It has so far delivered more than 215 million vaccine doses to over 138 countries and territories, including in 84 lower-middle income countries. COVAX aims to deliver 1.8 billion vaccines to lower-income countries by early 2022.

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## **UK Carrier Strike Group flagship HMS Queen Elizabeth to arrive in Japan**

The visit is part of the maiden operational deployment of HMS Queen Elizabeth. The period in and around Japan will reinforce the UK's commitment to a resilient international order in which open societies based on shared values grow prosperity and champion free trade. The visit is also an important component of the UK's renewed focus on the Indo-Pacific, outlined in the Integrated Review. The UK is committed to advancing security, defence and development cooperation with Japan, on the basis of a shared outlook on freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, as well as free trade.

In August, the ships and aircraft of the CSG21 undertook multinational joint exercises with global allies, including the Japanese Self Defence Forces and US Forces Japan. The exercises were designed to build interoperability between like-minded international partners in this globally significant region of the world.

UK Ambassador to Japan, Julia Longbottom said:

The visit to Japan of HMS Queen Elizabeth and other UK vessels of the Carrier Strike Group is a confident embodiment of the close and deepening relationship between the UK and Japan.

The UK is committed to peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region and as a like-minded democracy is committed to working with Japan to meet shared global challenges, such as cyber security and climate change, and to ensure the global systems that promote the free flow of trade and knowledge are strengthened.



The UK-Japan relationship has a long history. We believe this visit marks the elevation of our defence and security relationship to a new level.

The CSG21 will continue with a programme of bilateral maritime and air exercises with Japan's Self Defence Forces over the next few weeks. Royal Navy ships from the CSG21, HMS Kent and HMS Richmond, also visited the Japanese port of Sasebo last month.

Whilst in the region, the deployment will also support a range of engagements that promote the UK's wider international priorities in 2021 as Chair of the G7, as champion of Global Girls Education and as host for the UN Climate Summit (COP26) in November. All activities will be conducted safely and securely and in accordance with the stringent Covid-19 prevention measures of the Royal Navy and compliant with those set by the Japanese government.

UK Defence Attaché to Japan, Captain Simon Staley said:

The Carrier Strike Group's deployment to Japan and the Indo-Pacific as part of its maiden operational voyage demonstrates the UK's commitment to work with Japan, our closest security partner in Asia.

To operate alongside the JSDF in exercises covering surface warfare, anti-submarine warfare and air warfare, we have pushed our partnership to a new level. In demonstrating our maritime capability and ambition we can work further with Japan in developing equipment together in the future.

Free-to-use photos of the Carrier Strike Group (CSG21), are available to download [here](#) and [here](#).

The Integrated Review, entitled 'Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy' can be found [here](#). As part of its maiden operational deployment, the CSG21 will sail over 26,000 nautical miles, engaging with 40 countries from the Mediterranean to the Indo-Pacific and back again.

This deployment will provide tangible reassurance and security to our friends and a credible deterrence to those who seek to undermine global security.

As the spearhead of UK's Joint Expeditionary capability and a cornerstone of the UK's conventional military deterrent, the CSG21 comprises nine ships, 32 aircraft and one submarine and is manned by 3,700 sailors, aviators and marines from the combined forces of the UK, US and the Netherlands.

The fifth generation HMS Queen Elizabeth carrier, at 65,000 tonnes, is the largest surface vessel ever constructed in the UK. Taller than Niagara Falls,

her propellers generate the power of 50 high-speed trains. She leads six Royal Navy ships, a Royal Navy submarine, a US Navy destroyer and a frigate from the Netherlands in the largest concentration of maritime and air power to leave the UK in a generation. It is equipped with the fifth generation F-35B Lightning multi-role aircrafts. They are being jointly crewed by the Royal Air Force, Royal Navy and the US Marine Corps.

From defending democratic values and tackling shared threats, to seizing new trade opportunities through engagements with Singapore, the Republic of Korea, Japan, India and others, the deployment marks a step-change in UK engagement in the region. The UK is already investing significantly in the region having been conferred ASEAN Dialogue Partner status, commencing negotiations to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and rapidly progressing trade talks with Australia, New Zealand and India.

The UK's commitment to these enduring defence and security responsibilities in the Indo-Pacific will be enhanced this Autumn by the deployment of two of the newest and greenest Royal Navy warships, as HMS Tamar and HMS Spey set sail from the UK for their permanent assignment in the Indo-Pacific.

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## [UK to provide £30 million of life-saving supplies for Afghan refugees](#)

Press release

The UK announces up to £30 million of life-saving aid to Afghanistan's neighbouring countries to help those who choose to leave Afghanistan during the crisis there.



The UK will be releasing up to £30 million of life-saving aid to Afghanistan's neighbouring countries to help those who choose to leave

Afghanistan as part of the Government's efforts to support regional stability.

£10 million will be made available immediately to humanitarian partners, such as the UNHCR, to enable essential supplies such as shelters to be despatched to the Afghan borders as well as setting up sanitation and hygiene facilities. A further £20 million will be allocated to countries that experience a significant increase in refugees to support reception and registration facilities and provide essential services and supplies.

**Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab said:**

It is vital that we help those fleeing Afghanistan and do not allow the crisis there to undermine regional stability.

That's why these life-saving supplies are so important. They will provide Afghans who have left everything behind with essential kit offering shelter and basic sanitation as they seek to pick up the pieces of their lives. This aid demonstrates the UK's commitment to shoulder our humanitarian responsibility and support those countries who will face the greatest demands for those displaced.

This is the first tranche of the additional funding, announced by the Prime Minister in response to the crisis when he doubled the UK's aid contribution to Afghanistan to £286 million this year.

The security and political instability in Afghanistan has compounded an already dire humanitarian situation for the Afghan population with 550,000 people displaced within Afghanistan since the start of the year and significant increases in refugees moving across Afghanistan's borders in recent weeks. The UNHCR estimates a worst case scenario of over 500,000 refugees fleeing the country to Pakistan, Tajikistan, Iran, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan in the coming months.

The disbursement of aid comes as the Foreign Secretary continues his visit to the region for talks on Afghanistan with the focus on securing safe passage for UK nationals and eligible Afghans as well as the Government's four international priorities – preventing Afghanistan becoming a haven for terrorists; responding to the humanitarian plight; safeguarding regional stability; and holding the Taliban to account on human rights.

**Notes to editors:**

- The UK announced the uplift in aid to Afghanistan on 18 August 2021, bringing UK funding for this year to £286 million [here](#).
- The UK's total aid contribution to the country since 2001 is now around £3.5 billion.