

Norfolk town plagued by abattoir stench

A Norfolk community largely prevented from leaving their homes in the first coronavirus lockdown in 2020 had to endure the stench from decaying poultry at an abattoir.

Residents described the putrid smell as like 'rotting bodies and flesh'. Another was physically sick.

A court heard the Environment Agency received nearly 350 complaints from local people and businesses in the area surrounding the site in Attleborough between 2019 and 2021.

Animal blood was allowed to flood the slaughterhouse floor

Owner Banham Poultry (2018) Ltd has been fined £300,000 for failing to stop odour pollution from the slaughterhouse affecting the lives of people living and working in the market town.

Dirty water from where chickens were washed sat unhygienically on the floor of the Banham Poultry abattoir

District judge Andrew King heard the abattoir had broken or damaged doors and walls, a roof so weak it collapsed, and another part of the site unsafe for Environment Agency staff to enter. He acknowledged practices at Banham Poultry had a 'significant effect on quality of life' in the town.

Odours from the abattoir were allowed to escape into the community through damaged walls like this one

People couldn't enjoy their gardens, and nauseating smells entering their homes were difficult to remove.

Poultry was brought into the abattoir alive and prepared to be later sold in shops and restaurants.

Banham, now under new management from the time of the offending, had a permit from the Environment Agency to slaughter up to 67 million birds a year, more than a million every week.

Streets and houses were overpowered by a constant whiff from the abattoir as the stay-at-home pandemic laws had unintended consequences. But the repulsive smells around Attleborough began more than a year before lockdown.

The Environment Agency warned the company to act after 9 complaints about the slaughterhouse were made early in 2019, coinciding with waste blood kept on site too long.

Believing the company had breached its permit for managing smells, investigators gave Banham Poultry an enforcement notice to limit or prevent odours leaving the boundary of the abattoir.

Sophie Cousins, who led the investigation into the abattoir for the Environment Agency, said:

Banham Poultry failed to invest in odour-prevention. People living and working nearby were badly affected over a long period of time.

The Environment Agency decided on prosecution after Banham missed many chances to comply with the law. We gave them time and assistance to put matters right, but the problems just mounted up.

The site's odour management plan, meant to control the effect of work on the community, was 'ripped up', according to one employee. Another member of staff wrote in an e-mail in 2019 they were 'embarrassed...' and couldn't defend the company's poor management of the site, adding 'we stink'.

The Environment Agency consistently told Banham the plan either didn't contain the necessary measures to prevent odour pollution, or procedures weren't being followed. Banham either responded to the warnings very late or simply ignored them.

District judge King also said in court:

The Environment Agency was seeking to work with Banham Poultry... far and beyond what was required of them as a regulator. Investigators sought to solve problems, providing training to various levels of management, seemingly to no avail.

Investigators went out of their way to make sure Banham followed the right procedures, for example, creating a spreadsheet detailing what needed to be done, but when the complaints kept coming in, legal action was the only outcome.

The court heard foul-smelling air escaped through damaged and open doors. Watery blood from poultry collected on the abattoir floor, prevented from draining away because of blocked drains.

Other parts of the building were badly corroded and beyond repair. Part of the site collapsed in May 2020 when the roof caved in. Structural weaknesses saw another roof blow off in a storm. Repairs that were done were said to be 'shabby'.

Finding decaying animal parts, investigators were also concerned at poor housekeeping, and no contingency plan when animal blood and waste was on site too long.

The shortcomings were made worse by carcasses stored outside in the hot summer of 2020. Dead animals were kept in a trailer in sweltering conditions with no refrigeration.

Staff lacked the relevant training in environmental issues, so were unable to deal with the abattoir's many problems, described by the agency as 'chronic'.

The Environment Agency recorded odours 86 times outside the abattoir from the start of 2019 to September last year, ranging from faint to very strong – all of which came from the abattoir.

People living in Station Road, Maurice Gaymer Road and New North Road were particularly worst hit by the stench of animal carcasses, blood and offal, but businesses were affected, too.

Staff and customers at local firms like a food manufacturer and a tyre repair centre had to put up with the consequence of Banham's poor management.

The company pleaded guilty to failing to keep activities free from odour levels likely to cause pollution outside the abattoir between January 2019 and September 2021.

Banham also admitted not complying with an enforcement notice served on it by the Environment Agency that set out steps they should have taken to limit or prevent odours leaving the site.

District judge King ruled the offences as reckless culpability. He fined Banham Poultry (2018) Ltd, of Station Road, Attleborough, £300,000 for breaching regulation 38 (2) of the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2016. He imposed no separate penalty for a breach of regulation 38 (3) – not complying with the enforcement notice.

The hearing at Chelmsford magistrates' court on 15 September 2022 also ordered Banham Poultry to pay £67,621.45 in costs and a victim surcharge of £170.

Parents warned about dangers of children missing vaccines

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is urging parents and guardians to ensure their children are up to date with all their routine childhood immunisations including polio and measles, mumps and rubella (MMR)

vaccinations. This comes as new data shows vaccination coverage for young children fell last year for virtually all programmes.

Vaccination rates have fallen over several years and additional disruption caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, beginning in March 2020, is likely to have caused some of the decreases in vaccine coverage seen in 2020 to 2021 and 2021 to 2022 compared to earlier years.

It is important vaccination coverage is recovered as soon as possible to levels recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) of 95% for all childhood immunisation programmes to help prevent the spread of avoidable serious – and sometimes deadly – diseases such as measles and polio.

The latest vaccination statistics from UKHSA and NHS Digital for children up to 5 years of age in the UK (COVER programme) show coverage decreased for 13 out of the 14 routine vaccination programmes measured in 2021 to 2022.

Only 89.2% of children at 24 months had completed their first dose of the MMR vaccine, which is a decrease from 90.3% in the previous year.

Coverage for the second dose of MMR by age 5 years was also down by nearly 1%.

Coverage for the first dose of MMR at 24 months was less than 90% in 61 (out of 149) local authorities.

Coverage also decreased for the 6-in-1 and 5-in-1 vaccine, which protects against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio, disease caused by *Haemophilus influenzae* type b and hepatitis B, among children aged 12 months, 24 months, and 5 years.

Since the introduction of the measles vaccine in 1968 it is estimated that 20 million measles cases and 4,500 deaths have been prevented in the UK.

Measles is highly contagious so even a small decline in MMR uptake can lead to a rise in cases. Since international travel has resumed closer to pre-pandemic levels, it is more likely that measles will be brought in from countries that have higher levels of the disease and cause outbreaks.

Measles can lead to complications such as ear infections, pneumonia, and inflammation of the brain which require hospitalisation and on rare occasions can lead to long term disability or death.

The NHS is running a MMR catch-up campaign so some parents may be contacted directly.

Low polio vaccination rates in parts of London have left communities vulnerable to the spread of poliovirus, which has been detected in parts of North and East London through sewage surveillance. To date, no clinical cases of polio have been identified but health services have been urged to remain vigilant to any cases of paralysis in children.

A polio vaccination campaign, recommended by the expert immunisation

committee JCVI, is under way in London for all 1- to 9-year-olds, either as a booster dose or catch-up and it's important all parents take up this offer as soon as possible to help protect their child.

Dr Vanessa Saliba, Consultant epidemiologist at UKHSA, said:

Measles is highly contagious and can be dangerous, and it is extremely worrying that we are seeing levels of uptake of the MMR vaccine falling among young children. It is also vitally important that children get their polio vaccinations to help prevent the risk of paralysis.

I would urge parents to check that all children are up to date with their vaccines, and if not to get them booked in as soon as possible to make sure they have maximum protection against what can be terrible diseases.

Childhood vaccines also boost population immunity levels, helping prevent outbreaks, so by taking up all vaccinations for our children, we play our part in keeping these diseases confined to the past.

Anyone who is unsure if their child is up to date with all their routine vaccinations should check their child's red book (personal child health record) in the first instance. If you are still not sure, or if you need to bring your child up to date with their vaccines, contact your GP practice to check and book an appointment.

To find out more about childhood vaccinations, please visit the [NHS website](#).

Child Safeguarding Practice Review **Panel: third national review**

Letters between:

- interim chair of the independent Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, Karen Manners QPM
- panel member Mark Gurrey
- Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson
- Minister for Safeguarding, Rachel Maclean, Parliamentary Undersecretary for Children and Families, Will Quince, and Minister of State for Care and Mental Health Gillian Keegan

The panel's letter announces a national child safeguarding practice review into non-accidental injury in children under one. It also gives further

details about the review including:

- terms of reference
- details of panel members carrying it out
- timescale

Gavin Williamson's letter welcomes the announcement of the review.

The letter from Rachel Maclean, Will Quince and Gillian Keegan sets out the action the government is taking in response to the review.

[DBS and Premier League support football club safeguarding activity](#)

News story

DBS and the Premier League are working to enhance football clubs' approach to safeguarding vulnerable people.



The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) is providing tailored support to [Premier League](#) football clubs as part of an ongoing joint project. The aim of this project is to develop the clubs' approach to safeguarding vulnerable groups, including children.

As part of this project between the Premier League and [DBS' regional outreach service](#), football clubs will:

- be able to access bespoke information and guidance relating to DBS processes and legislation, including eligibility for DBS checks and the legal duty to refer
- receive training throughout each season to support the safe recruitment of employers and volunteers working with children, young adults, and adults at risk
- be able to connect with a regional outreach adviser from within DBS, who

can offer support and share best practices, enabling direct communication between football clubs and DBS

- have access to resources, publications, and other relevant information relating to DBS products and services, alongside other safeguarding materials to help prevent incidents and protect individuals via the Premier League Safeguarding Hub

The Premier League – which is also working closely with the [NSPCC](#) – is seeking to help clubs and their community organisations implement effective safer recruitment procedures and practices, ensuring staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children and adults at risk.

Eric Robinson, CEO of DBS, said:

Our Regional Outreach Service will be providing clubs with a single point of contact for all DBS-related queries and questions, as well as the opportunity to access tailored, DBS training for their staff and volunteers. Our team also collates feedback to ensure future improvements can be made to DBS services and processes.

DBS is committed to working with organisations through our Regional Outreach Service so we can keep the most vulnerable in our society safe. Any organisation of any size can access free support. Find out more by accessing [the regional outreach guidance on our website](#).

Jess Addicott, Head of Safeguarding at the Premier League, said:

Our work with DBS has been invaluable in providing clubs and their community organisations with additional support with their and safer recruitment procedures and practice. We look forward to continuing our collaborative work in this space to create safe environments and cultures.

[Making Recruitment Safer in football](#)

Published 29 September 2022

[Grading exams and assessments in summer 2023 and autumn 2022](#)

I promised to set out as soon as possible the arrangements for grading next

summer, to provide clarity for students, teachers, schools, colleges, universities and other users of qualifications.

This summer was an important step back towards normality. Our plans for 2023 take us a step further, whilst also recognising the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I've visited schools and colleges up and down the country and I've seen young people's admirable resilience and dedication.

I can confirm that, in 2023, we will return to pre-pandemic grading as the next step in getting back to normal. But giving the 2023 cohort some protection against any impact of COVID-19 disruption is the right thing to do.

We are, therefore, putting in place the same protection that was given for the first cohorts of students taking reformed GCSEs and A levels from 2017 onwards. That meant not disadvantaging students who might have performed less well because they were the first to sit new exams.

Exams and other formal assessments give students the fairest chance to show what they know, understand and can do, because the rules are the same for everyone. It's important that we get back to normal so that grades set young people up for college, university or employment in the best possible way, and help them to make the right choices about their future.

Students' interests drive our decisions – both this year's students and past and future students. For us, that means qualifications that maintain their value, now and in the future, and stand the test of time.

I set out below what this decision means for students, the protection we will build in for the 2023 cohort, and what those teaching and advising students need to know, particularly those predicting grades for UCAS applications.

Pre-pandemic standards for GCSE, AS and A level with protection for students

Students in the 2023 cohort have not experienced national school and college closures during their 2-year courses of study, but we know they have experienced some disruption. That's why we're putting in place some protection for this cohort.

As in any year, grade boundaries for every specification will be set by the senior examiners after they have reviewed the work produced by students in the assessments. But those senior examiners will be guided in their decisions about where to set grade boundaries by information about the grades achieved in pre-pandemic years by cohorts of students, along with prior attainment data. That means the 2023 cohort will be protected in grading terms if their exam performance is a little lower than before the pandemic.

Broadly speaking, therefore, a typical student who would have achieved an A grade in their A level geography before the pandemic will be just as likely

to get an A next summer, even if their performance in the assessments is a little weaker in 2023 than it would have been before the pandemic.

We expect that overall results in 2023 will be much closer to pre-pandemic years than results since 2020. This decision means that results in 2023 will be lower than in 2022. At this point in the academic year, we can't be precise about results in specific subjects and specifications. Entries have not yet been made and students have not taken any exams. But there is no pre-determined 'quota' of grades.

November 2022 GCSEs

Some students will re-sit GCSE English language and/or maths in November. This will include students who wish to improve on their grade from summer 2022 or who had planned to enter in summer 2022 but were unable to do so.

For this reason, exam boards will align November 2022 grading with the standards from summer 2022. Aligning standards in November with the preceding summer is the approach that we took in 2020 and 2021.

Vocational and technical qualifications

For vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) taken in schools and colleges, alongside or instead of GCSEs and A levels, awarding organisations are expected to take account of the approach used in general qualifications so that students taking VTQs are not advantaged or disadvantaged in comparison. For these VTQs this means a return to pre-pandemic standards.

In T Levels, we have asked awarding organisations to be generous in the first years of awards, to reflect the fact these qualifications are new.

Predicted grades for UCAS

Teachers this term are predicting grades for their students to use for their UCAS applications. In line with [UCAS guidance](#), many students will already have been given an indication of their predicted grades by their teachers.

It can be challenging for teachers to predict grades accurately at the best of times. In summer 2022, predicted grades were at their highest level. We expect predicted grades in summer 2023 to be much closer to those seen in pre-pandemic years. **For 2023, we recommend that teachers use the familiar pre-pandemic standard as the basis for predicting their students' grades.** That familiarity will make it easier for teachers to generate predictions for their students that are aspirational but achievable, in line with UCAS guidance.

UCAS and universities have told us that accurate predictions, determined in line with pre-pandemic arrangements, will enable them to be more confident in offer-making. Universities will take account of how exams will be graded when they make their offers. That is why this grading decision is in the interest of students. To be clear, this decision has no effect on the availability of

places.

Background

Last September I set out a provisional 2-year decision. I said that we planned to get back to pre-pandemic grading in 2023, and that 2022 results would broadly reflect a mid-way point between 2021 and 2019. Students were starting out on their 2-year programmes of study and it was important that they, and their teachers, should start with a sense of how they'd be graded at the end. At that time, no exams had happened for over 2 years and the disruption caused by the pandemic was keenly felt. I said then that we would review our position following the release of 2022 results, before confirming the approach for 2023.

Summer 2022 saw the welcome return to exams and other formal assessments, taken by more than a million students, which was a milestone in society returning to normal.

In 2023 and beyond, students will again have the opportunity to show what they know and can do in exams and formal assessments. Students up and down the country have told me over the past year that this is what they want.

The government and Ofqual have already confirmed some of the arrangements for 2023.

As public health measures are no longer in force, Ofqual confirmed in May that the usual [pre-pandemic arrangements for non-exam assessment \(NEA\), fieldwork and practical science are now back in place for the 2023 cohort](#). The Department for Education confirmed at the same time the return to full subject content coverage for all GCSE subjects, so that students can study the full curriculum.

[A summary of the arrangements for all GCSE, AS and A levels in 2023](#) can be found on our website.

The Department for Education (DfE) has asked us to continue to require exam boards to provide formulae and revised equation sheets for A level mathematics, physics and combined science exams. DfE has also asked us to permanently remove the requirement for exam boards to include unfamiliar vocabulary in GCSE modern foreign language assessments. We are consulting on both of these proposed arrangements.

DfE and Ofqual are also keen to build resilience in the exam system and learn lessons from the arrangements last year. A consultation has been launched which proposes that schools, colleges and exam centres should build collecting and retaining evidence of student performance into their normal arrangements for preparing students to take exams.

For VTQs in the academic year 2021 to 2022, awarding organisations decided which adaptations were appropriate for their qualifications in accordance with [Ofqual's rules](#).

Some adaptations were in response to public health restrictions which are no longer in place, so these adaptations are no longer necessary. Awarding organisations may decide to continue to use practices developed during the pandemic which worked well, such as remote assessment or remote invigilation, and we are keeping these arrangements under review.

For VTQs used alongside or instead of GCSEs and A levels, awarding organisations were expected to take account of the approach to adaptations used in general qualifications to ensure that students were not advantaged or disadvantaged. In light of the announcements for GCSEs and A levels for 2023, we do not expect any further adaptations to be used in VTQs.