

### Briefing - Lucy's law

Intended to address oft-repeated concerns about the standard of puppy breeding in Wales, particularly at alleged “puppy-farms” in west Wales, the Animal Welfare (Breeding of Dogs) (Wales) Regulations 2014 came into force on the 30 April 2015. These Regulations introduced new welfare standards to protect breeding dogs and to ensure that puppies are properly cared for and socialised, and are being implemented by Local Authorities across Wales. Similar legislation is now in place in England around the breeding and sale of puppies, but neither the English or Welsh legislation controls the breeding and sale of kittens other than via licensed pet shops.

The Lucy's law campaign started with a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel called Lucy, who was rescued from a Welsh puppy farm five years ago suffering from a number of serious health issues that the Welsh Regulations are now intended to prevent. However, animal welfare charities have expressed concerns (shared by many local authority officers) that it is still too easy to import puppies or breed them in the UK under poor conditions, and then sell them to unsuspecting owners. Underage puppies that are ill or poorly socialised are being reported to local authorities on an increasingly regular basis.

The Environment Secretary, Michael Gove, has recognised the groundswell of public opinion that further action is needed to control the sale of puppies and kittens. Defra have now completed a consultation in England, which will be reported back shortly, and there is an increasing expectation that English law will change to ban the sale of puppies and kittens from any third party sellers. In Wales, the Welsh Government are considering the matter and have recently carried out research on licensed pet shops and dog breeding in Wales

### The Torfaen picture

There are no pet shops or other licensed businesses selling puppies or kittens in Torfaen. There is one licensed dog breeder, with a number of other dog breeders falling outside of the current licensing regime, although this is believed to significantly under-report dog breeding and sales in the Torfaen area. Unfortunately, the sale of puppies across a wide range of media channels that give few, if any, clues to their geographical location, makes the identification of those breeding and selling puppies almost impossible.

There have been around 8 complaints in 2017 and 2018 concerning possible dog breeding in Torfaen. Whilst the majority of dog breeders care for their dogs and sell happy, healthy puppies, there is concern that some sellers are falsely claiming to have bred puppies that were, in fact, bred elsewhere or even imported.

Banning third party puppy and kitten sales will not prevent unscrupulous dealers from misleading customers – but it will make it more difficult for them to operate.