



Pet Shop Licensing: Results from the Freedom of Information Request to all UK Local Authorities and Questionnaire of Retailers and their Pet Shop Licence

Part 1: Freedom of Information Request

Overview of Local Authority responses

According to the direct.gov website, there are 406 local authorities (LA) in the UK (England - 326, Scotland - 32, Wales - 22 and Northern Ireland - 26). Unlike the rest of the UK, Northern Ireland deals with pet shop licensing centrally rather than relying on its 26 LAs. At the time of writing, responses have been received by 368 (90.6%) of all LAs.

For the purposes of analysing the data, the UK was divided into 12 regions as defined by the UK Government¹: East Midlands, East of England, Greater London, North East England, North West England, South East England, South West England, West Midlands, Yorkshire and the Humber, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland.

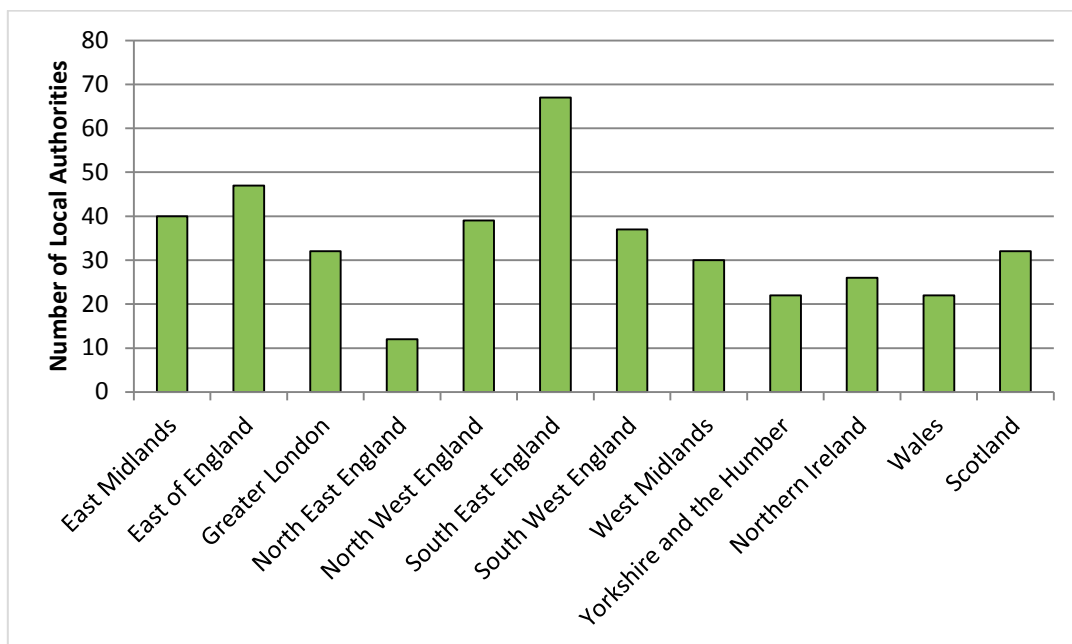


Fig 1. Number of Local Authorities in each region of the UK

The Isle of Scilly Council responded stating it had no pet shops and their response has been included for completeness. East Ayrshire Council refused to complete suggesting that either the data was already in the public domain or that the nature of the questions was not related to a freedom of information request.

¹ DirectGov Website: <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DI1/Directories/Localcouncils/index.htm>

1. Who carries out your pet shop licensing visits?

Environmental Health Officer
Licensing Officer
Other (Please specify)

Dog Warden
 Vet

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

Region	Local Authority Response (%)				
	EHO	Dog Warden	Licensing Officer	Vet	Other
East Midlands	65.8	5.3	28.9	13.2	26.3
East of England	41.7	16.7	25.0	22.2	30.6
Greater London	17.2	10.3	41.4	24.1	55.2
North East England	18.2	0.0	36.4	27.3	54.5
North West England	50.0	0.0	13.9	5.6	44.4
South East England	47.7	15.4	32.3	15.4	21.5
South West England	14.7	11.8	32.4	14.7	47.1
West Midlands	40.0	12.0	36.0	8.0	32.0
Yorkshire and the Humber	21.1	10.5	47.4	5.3	36.8
Northern Ireland	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0
Wales	19.0	0.0	38.1	33.3	47.6
Scotland	65.4	11.5	3.8	30.8	38.5
All UK	37.2	9.0	27.3	23.0	33.9

Table 1. Type of inspector used to conduct PSL visits (N.B. Percentages do not add up to 100% as LAs were allowed to tick more than one option)

The titles in the “Other” category include a plethora of descriptors. For analysis, these have been categorised into animal, environmental, public health and safety, and generic related positions. The full categorisation is outlined in the table below.

Animal Health & Welfare	Environmental	Health, Safety & Public	General
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Animal Control Enforcement Officer •Animal Control Officer •Animal Health & Welfare Inspector •Animal Health and Welfare Officer •Animal Health Inspector •Animal Health Officer •Animal Officers •Animal Warden •Animal Welfare and Licensing officer •Animal Welfare and Technical Officer •Animal Welfare Officer •Community & Animal Health Officer •Enforcement Officer (Animal Health) •Senior Warden/Animal Welfare Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Business Support Officer - Enforcement (Environmental Health & licensing Services) •Environmental Health & Technical Officer •Environmental Health Assistant •Environmental Health Enforcement Officer •Environmental Health Scientific & Scientific officers •Environmental Health Technical Officer •Environmental Health Technician •Environmental Protection Officer •Environmental Quality Manager •Environmental Technician •Senior Enforcement Officer (Animal Health) •Senior Environmental Assistant •Senior Pest Control Officer •Technical Officer in Environmental Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Consumer Protection Officer •Food health officer •Health & Safety Officer •Health Protection Officer •Public Health Technician •Public Protection Compliance Officer •Public Protection Officer and Neighbourhood Officer (Trading Standards) •Senior Consumer Protection Officer •Senior Fair Trading Officer, Trading Standards •Trading Standards Authorised Officer •Trading standards enforcement officer •Trading Standards Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •District Officers •Enforcement Officer •General Enforcement Officer •Regulatory Services Officer •Senior Officer/Enforcement Officer •Technical Officer
59 total responses	20 total responses	12 total responses	18 total responses

Table 2. List of other descriptions and their appropriate category

2. Upon what do you base your pet shop license conditions?

1992 LGA Guidelines
 1998 LGA Guidelines
 Other (Please specify)

2012 draft Guidelines
 Pet Care Trust QA standards

Guidelines	1992 LGA	1998 LGA	2012 draft guidelines	PCT QA standards	Other
Number of LAs	34	221	15	28	114
% of LAs	9.2	60.1	4.1	7.6	31.0

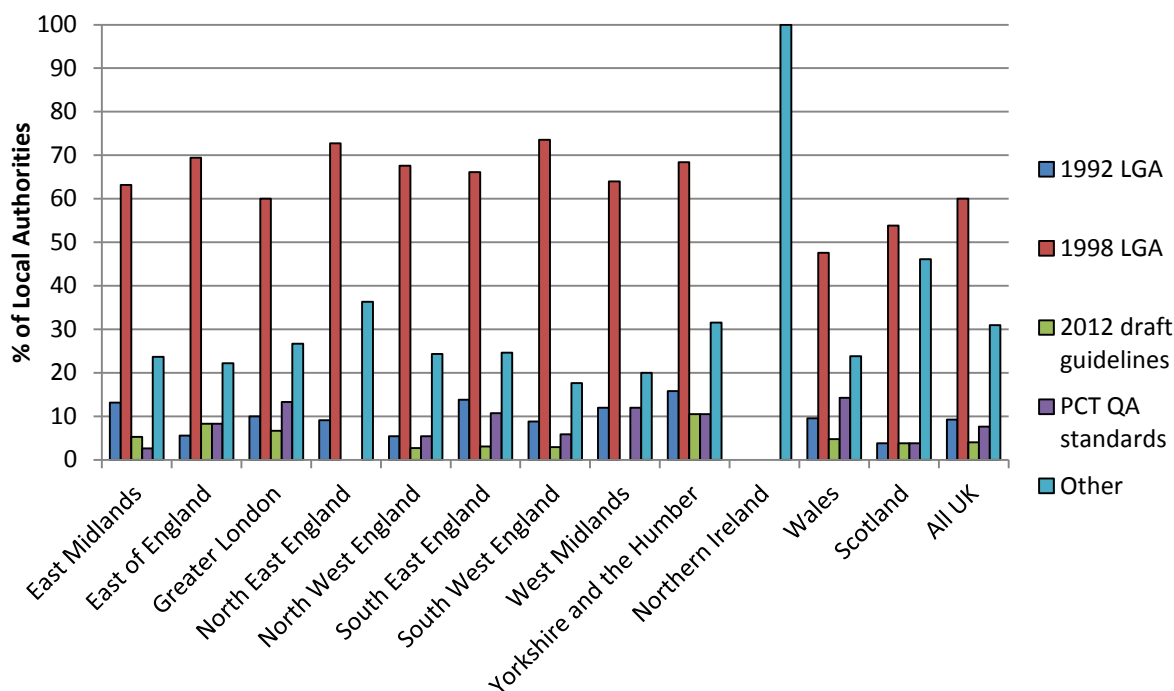


Fig 3. Model conditions used to create LA's PSL conditions

Northern Ireland use the Petshop Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000 Act for the construction of their pet shop licence conditions. Where “Other” was selected, many LAs did not specify what conditions they use. Those that did specify cited the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and the Pet Animal Act 1951. One LA stated they drafted their model conditions based on a conducted consultation or liaised with the RSPCA. The 29 LAs cited the Pet Care Trust QA standards as a basis for their pet shop licence conditions:

- Bedford Borough Council
- Caerphilly County Borough Council
- Cardiff Council
- Carlisle City Council
- Colchester Borough Council
- Coventry City Council
- Croydon London Borough Council
- Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
- Forest Heath District Council
- Gosport Borough Council
- Gravesham Borough Council
- Hart District Council
- Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council
- Isle of Wight Council
- Islington London Borough Council
- Mid Sussex District Council
- Milton Keynes Council
- Newport City Council
- Orkney Islands Council
- Plymouth City Council
- Redbridge London Borough Council
- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
- Sevenoaks District Council
- South Gloucestershire Council
- Sunderland City Council
- Tower Hamlets London Borough Council
- Wakefield Council
- Warrington Borough Council
- Wyre Forest District Council

3. How frequently do you conduct licensing visits?

Annually

Less frequently than annually

More frequently than annually

If “Annually” was not selected, LAs were asked to specify the frequency of visits. 81 of the responding LAs (22%) selected more or less frequently. Of these, only 21 either stipulated the time interval or stated the frequency of visits was based on risk with the remaining 60 not stipulating the inspection frequency.

Inspection Frequency	Annually	Less Frequently	More Frequently	Unknown
Number of LAs	276	27	54	11
% of LAs	75.0	7.3	14.7	3.0

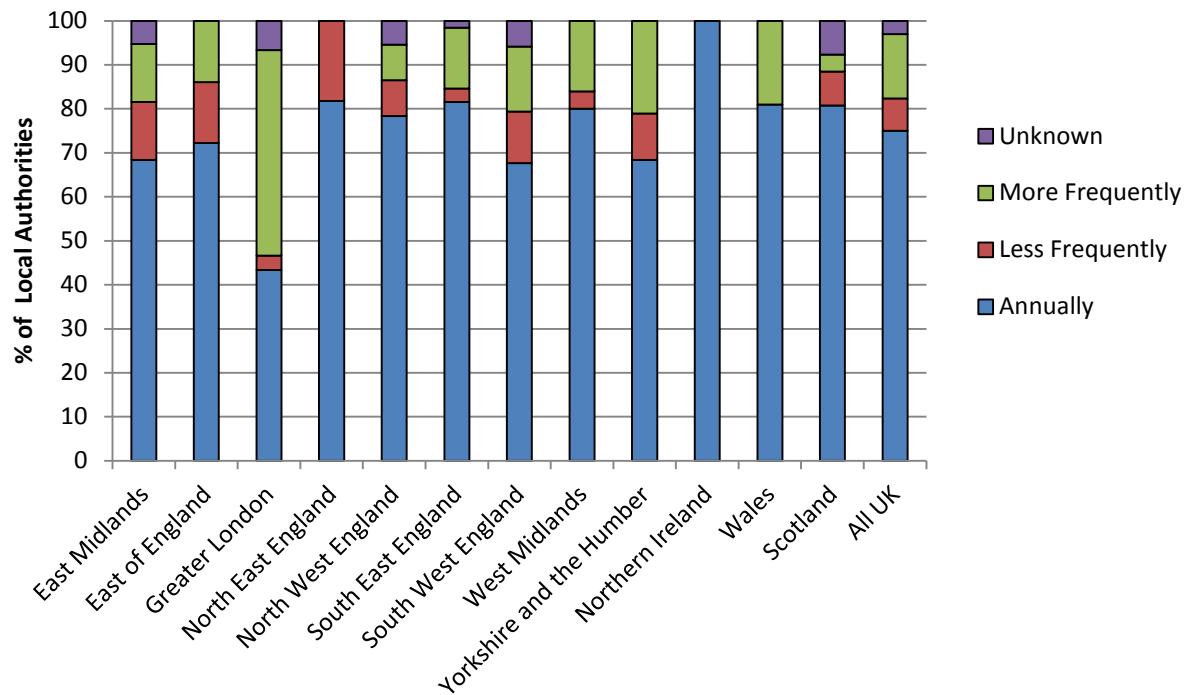


Fig 4. Frequency of pet shop inspections

4. For what other reasons will you visit a pet shop?

Pre booked monitoring visit
Unannounced spot checks

Complaints
Other (Please specify)

Reason for Visit	Pre-booked monitoring Visit	Complaints	Unannounced spot checks	Other
Number of LAs	88	344	209	30
% of LAs	23.9	93.5	56.8	8.2

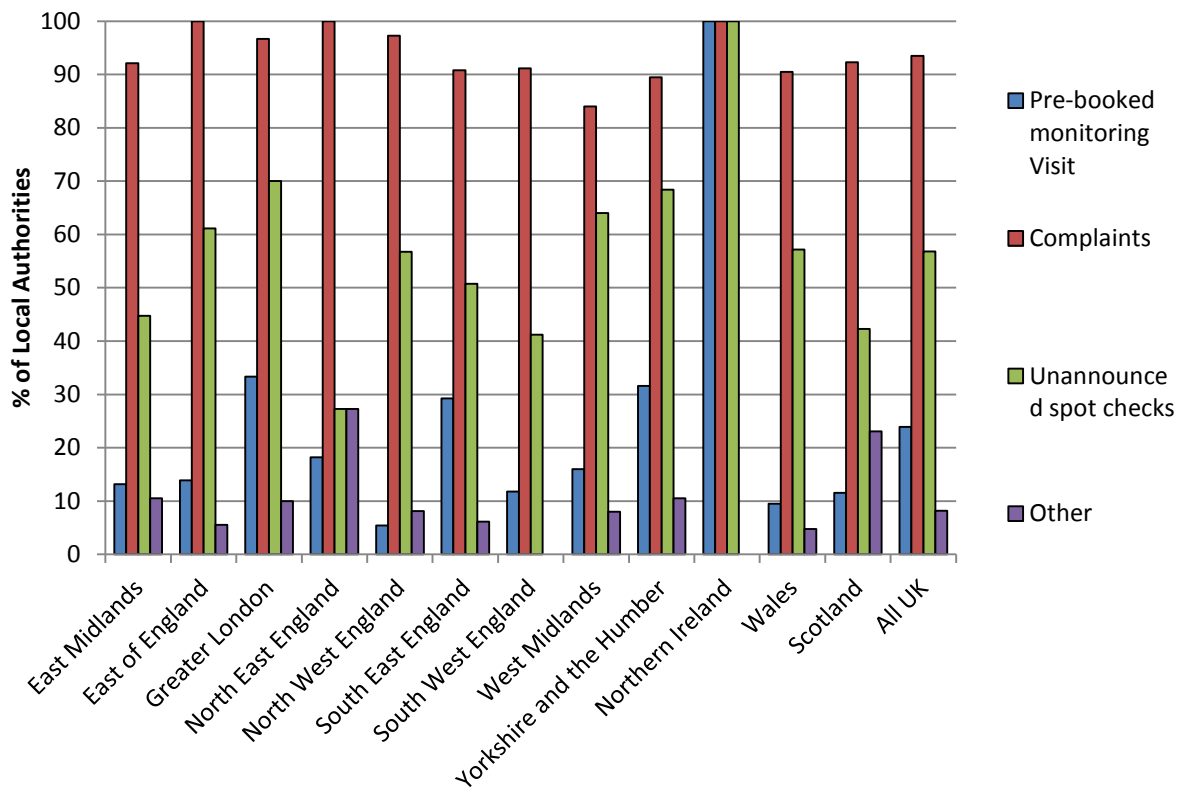


Fig 5. Other reasons for inspectors visiting pet shops

Where “Other” was selected (27 LAs), the reasons given included: “Changes to licence (building or stocked species), new applications, on request of the business, to gather intelligence and Health & Safety.

5. What do you charge annually for a pet shop license? £

The analysis of this question is made difficult by the different types of ways the PSL fee is calculated. The vast majority (300) of LAs set a flat figure, regardless of the size of pet shop, different types of animals kept, whether a vet is used or whether the business is seeking its first licence or a renewal. 28 LAs stipulated a fee but declared that this charge excluded an unspecified vet fee as required. 40 LAs set one figure for new applications and a reduced amount for renewals. Four of the LAs had highly variable pricing schemes using various methods such as shop size, range of animals kept (1 instance of “£25 for each category of animal” and another with three “tiers” based on range of animals kept) sometimes in conjunction with new and renewal fees.

For the sake of simplicity, the analysis has been performed with the following assumptions made:

- Where one figure was stipulated, this was used as the 2012/2013 fee
- Where 2 figures were given for the periods 2011/2012 and 2012/2013, only the 2012/2013 figures are used
- Entries from LAs who stipulated a set fee plus an unknown additional vet’s fee have been omitted from the analysis as these will lead to underestimating the means (28 removed)
- Where new and renewal pricing schemes are used, only the renewal cost has been taken into account on the assumption that most PSL applications are from existing retailers

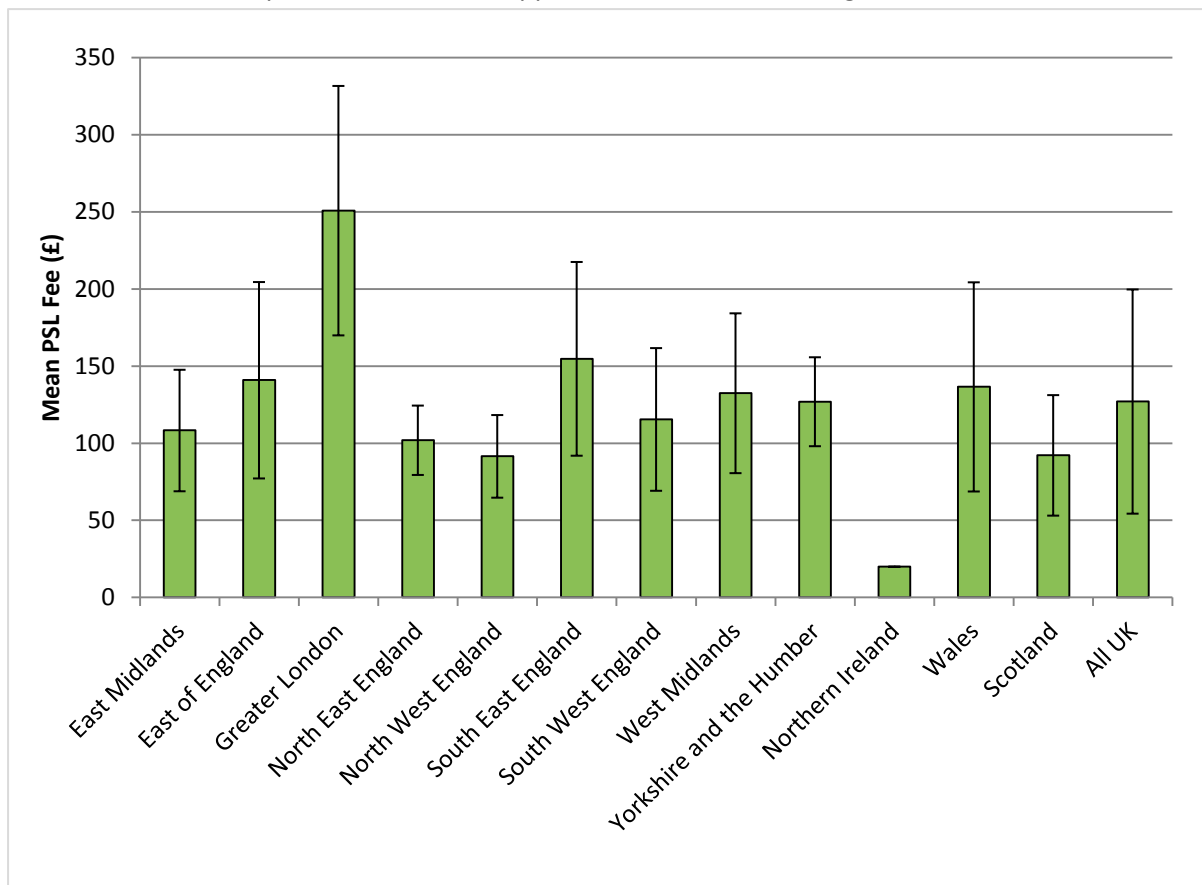


Fig 6. Means and standard deviations for PSL fees across the UK.

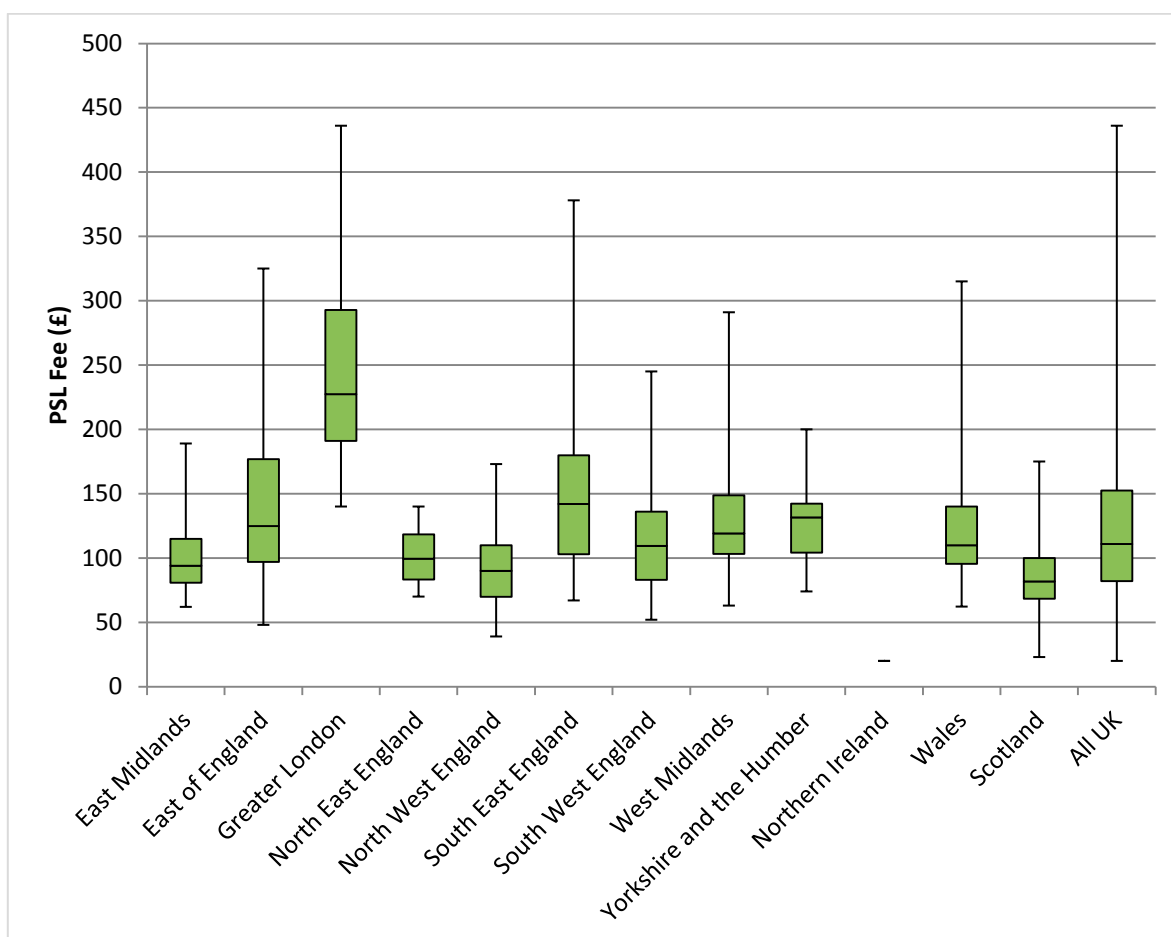


Fig 7. Box plot of PSL fees across the UK. The green boxes denote the 25-75% range (the middle marker representing the 50% value or median). The error bars denote the minimum and maximum. N.B. Northern Ireland only appears as a single line as it has one set fee of £20.

The UK mean for the price of a pet shop licence was £124.40 (SD = 69.9) and the median as £111.59. While most of the UK regions have similar means and medians, Northern Ireland is significantly cheaper at £20 across the whole region, while the mean and median for the London region is £242.50 (SD =66.7) and £227.50 respectively.

Analysing the LAs who stipulated a fee plus an unspecified vet fee as a separate group, the mean is £106.12 (SD = 46.2), and the median of £108.00)

6. Do (or have) those officers licensing pet shop licensing undertake relevant specialist training?

Please answer "Yes" or "No"

Of all of the LAs, only 5 did not provide a response to this question.

Response	Yes	No	Unknown
Number of LAs	260	103	5
% of LAs	70.7	28.0	1.4

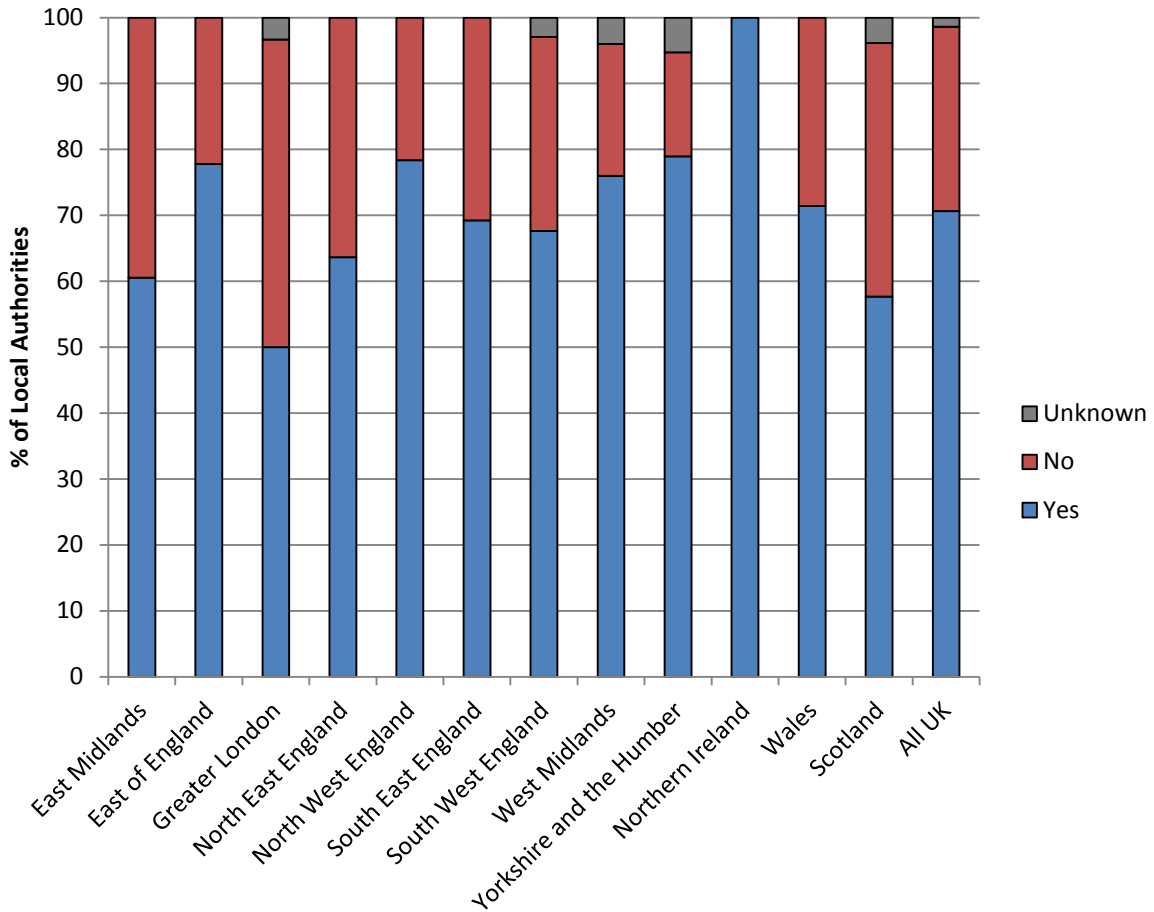


Fig 8. Percentages of inspectors that have relevant training to undertake pet shop licensing visits.

7. Would you consider sending officer(s) on specialist training courses if they were available?

Please answer "Yes" or "No"

339 local councils (92.1% of those responding) provided a "yes" or "no" answer to this questions.

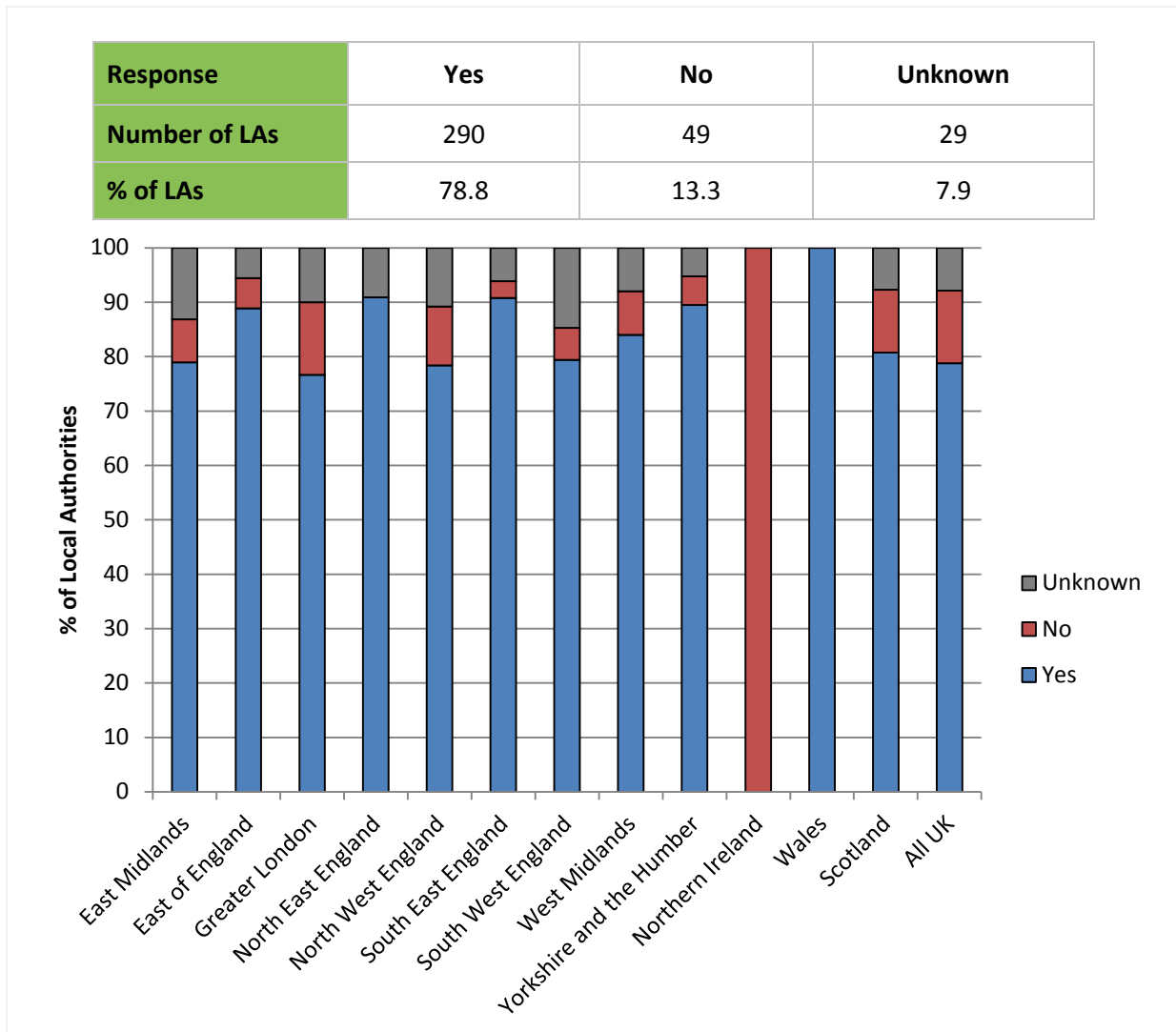


Fig 9. Percentages of LAs that would consider sending their inspecting officers on specialist training courses if available

A small percentage of LAs (6%) that answered "yes" stipulated that training would be sought on the condition of time, cost and location, but it is assumed that this is applicable to all. The remainder of LAs provided no answers with 6 suggesting that the question had no relevance to a Freedom of Information request or did not have such data available.



Part 2: Retailer Questionnaire

Overview of retailer responses

In total, 331 retailers responded to this questionnaire.

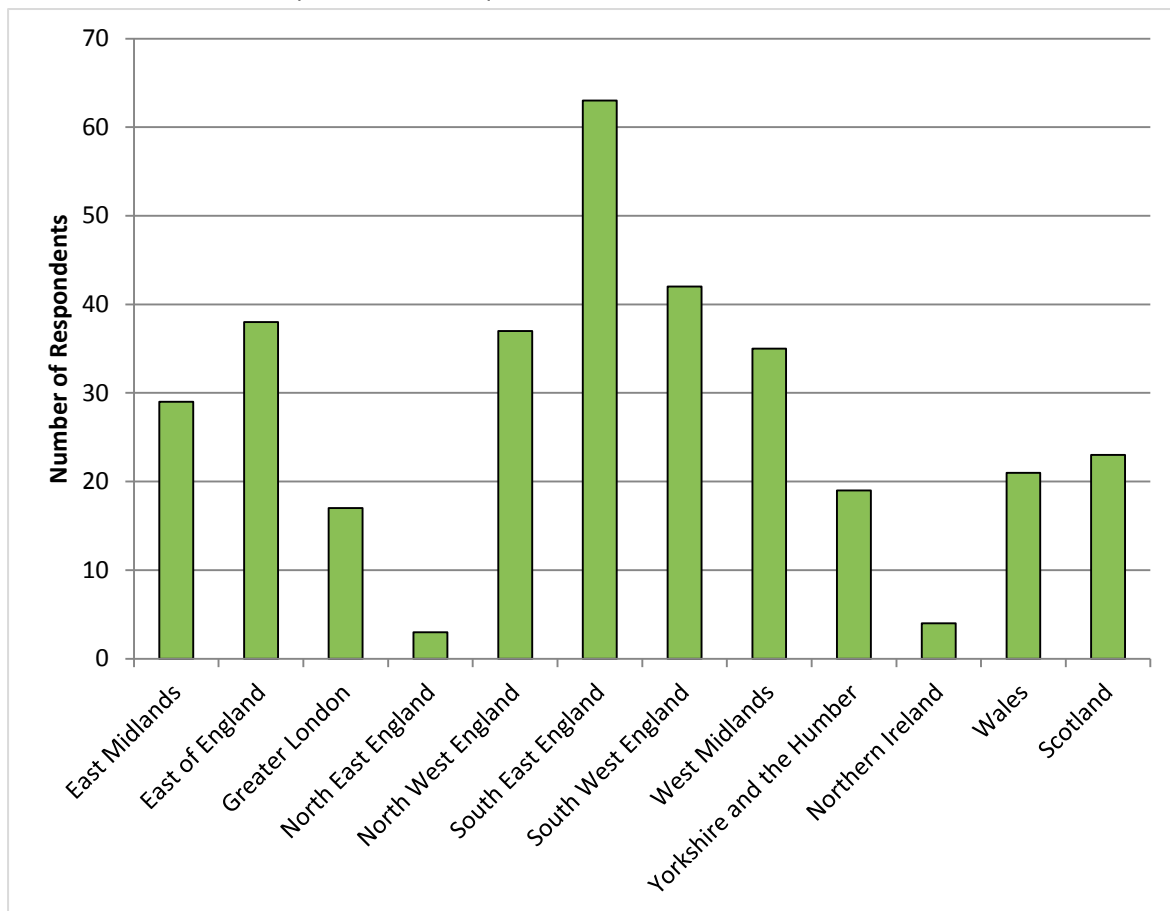


Fig 10. Number of retailers responding to questionnaire

1. What are you charged annually for your pet shop licence? £

307 retailers (92% of all responses) provided their pet shop licence fee.

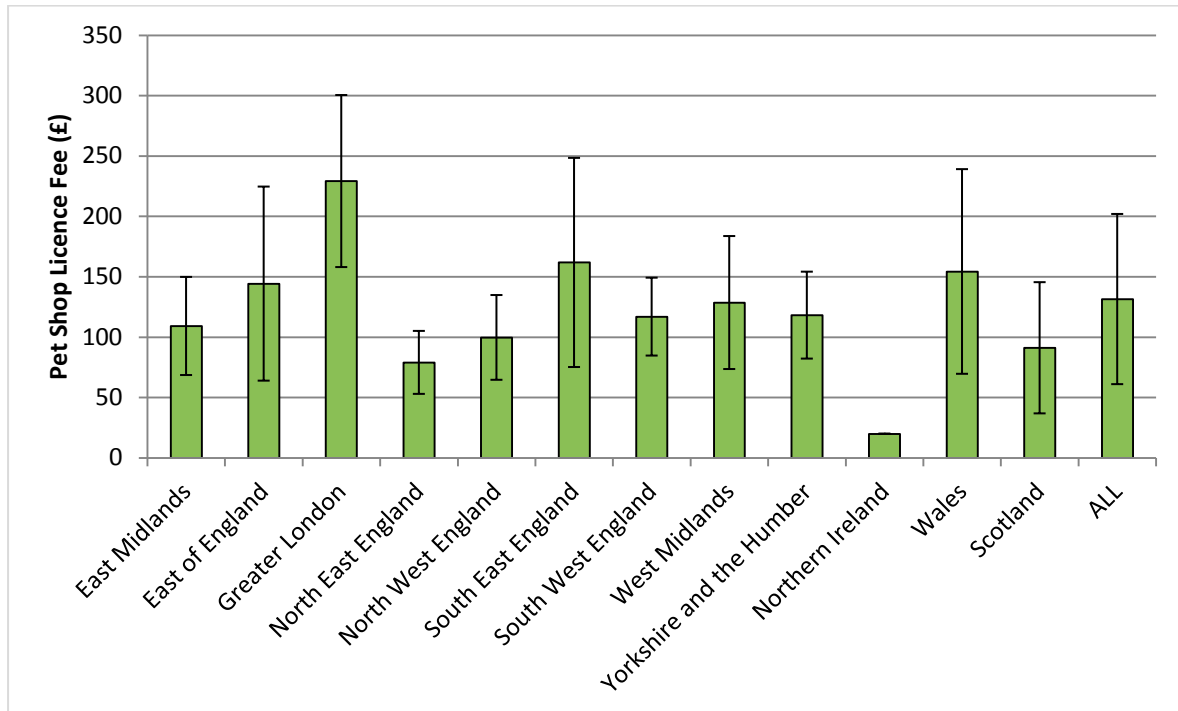


Fig 11. Means and standard deviations for PSL fees across the UK as reported by retailers

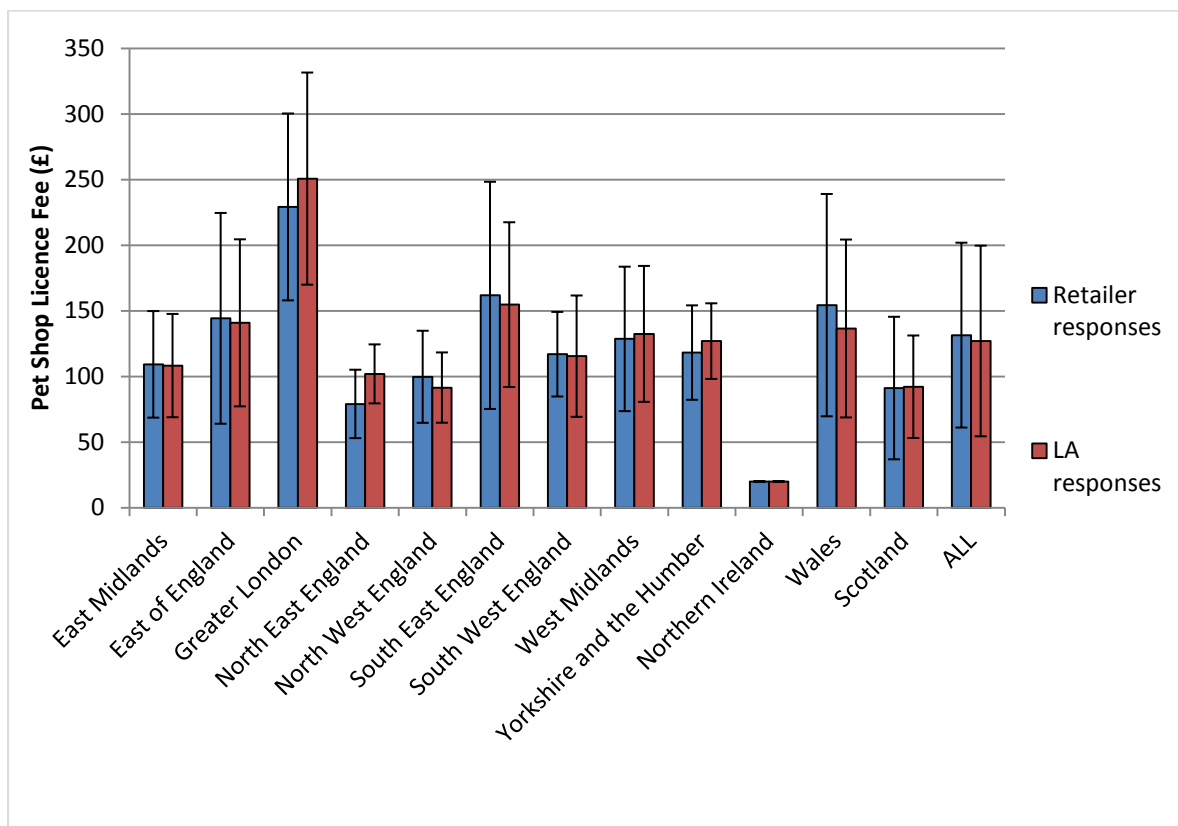


Fig 12. Comparison of means and standard deviations of pet shop licence fees.

The comparison of means and standard deviations by region show that there are no major differences between what the LAs report and that stated by retailers.

2. Who carries out your pet shop licensing visits?

Environmental Health Officer
 Licensing Officer
 Other (Please specify)

	Dog Warden
	Vet

Type of inspector	EHO	Dog Warden	Licensing Officer	Vet	Other
Number of responses	161	6	143	21	3
% of responses	48.6	1.8	43.2	6.3	0.9
(% of responses from LAs)	37.2	9.0	27.3	23.0	33.9

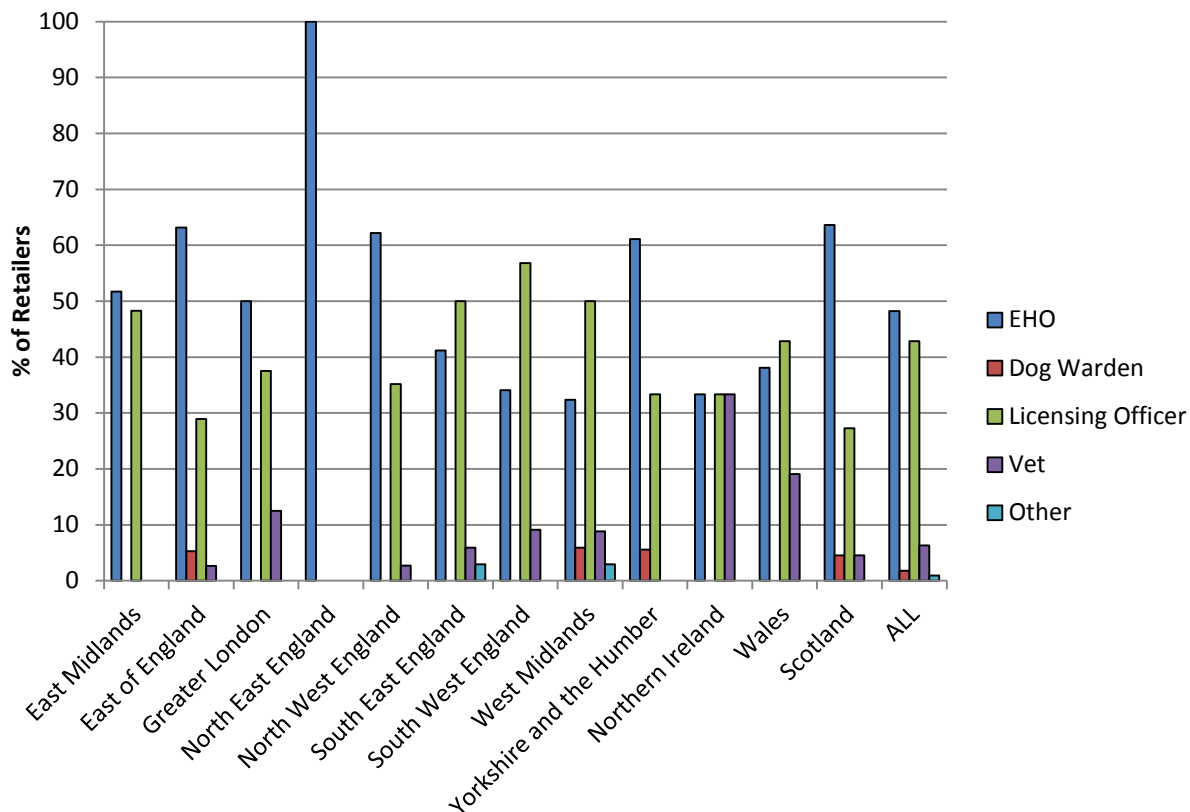


Fig 13. Type of inspector used to conduct pet shop licence inspections

The difference observed between what retailers have cited and the responses from the LAs is probably due to the wide variety of job title the inspecting offers receive.

3. How frequently do you have licensing visits?

Annually

Less frequently than annually

More frequently than annually

Frequency of visits	Annually	Less Frequently	More Frequently
Number of responses	311	9	11
% of responses	94.0	2.7	3.3
(% of responses from LAs)	75.0	7.3	14.7

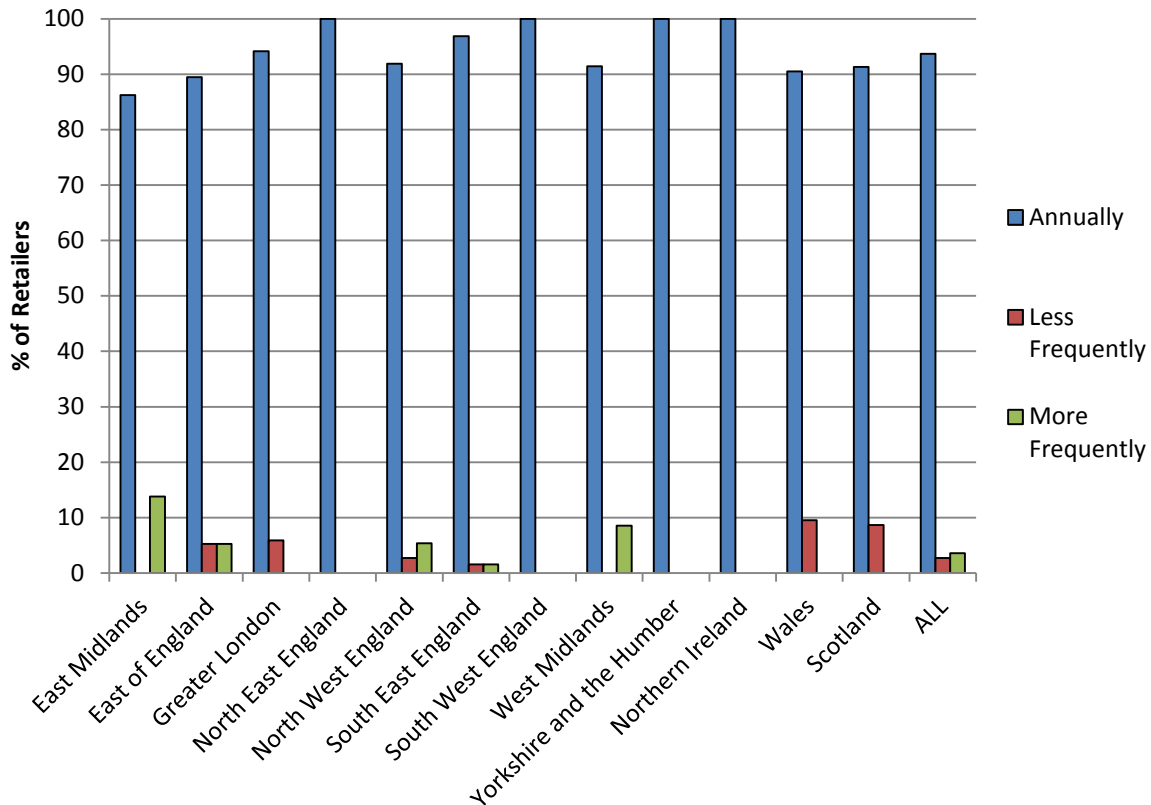


Fig 14. Frequency of pet shop licence inspections

94% of respondents stated that they had annual inspections. Of those who selected other than annually, only one stipulated the frequency of their visits (every six months).

4. For what other reasons does your local authorities visit your shop with regard to your licence?

Pre booked monitoring visit
Unannounced spot checks

Complaints
Other (Please specify)

Reason for visit	Pre booked monitoring visits	Complaints	Spot checks	Other
Number of responses	25	246	259	13
% of responses	7.6	74.3	78.2	3.9
(% of responses from LAs)	23.9	93.5	56.8	8.2

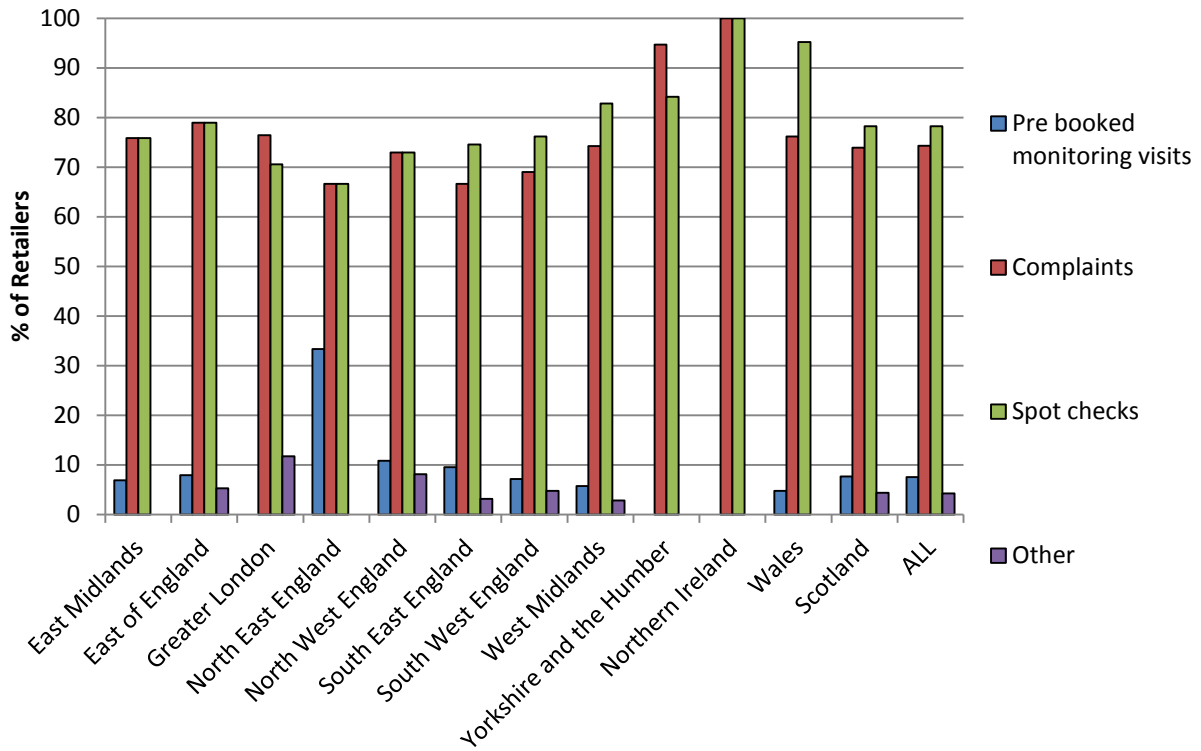


Fig 15. Other reasons for inspectors making pet shop visits

5. How confident are you in the ability of licensing officers to ensure the welfare of animals in retail outlets is maintained adequately?

Very confident
Confident

Have little confidence
Have no confidence

Retailers were also given the opportunity to provide other comments.

Confidence level	Very confident	Confident	Little confidence	No confidence
Number of responses	73	109	49	10
% of responses	22.7	59.0	15.2	3.1

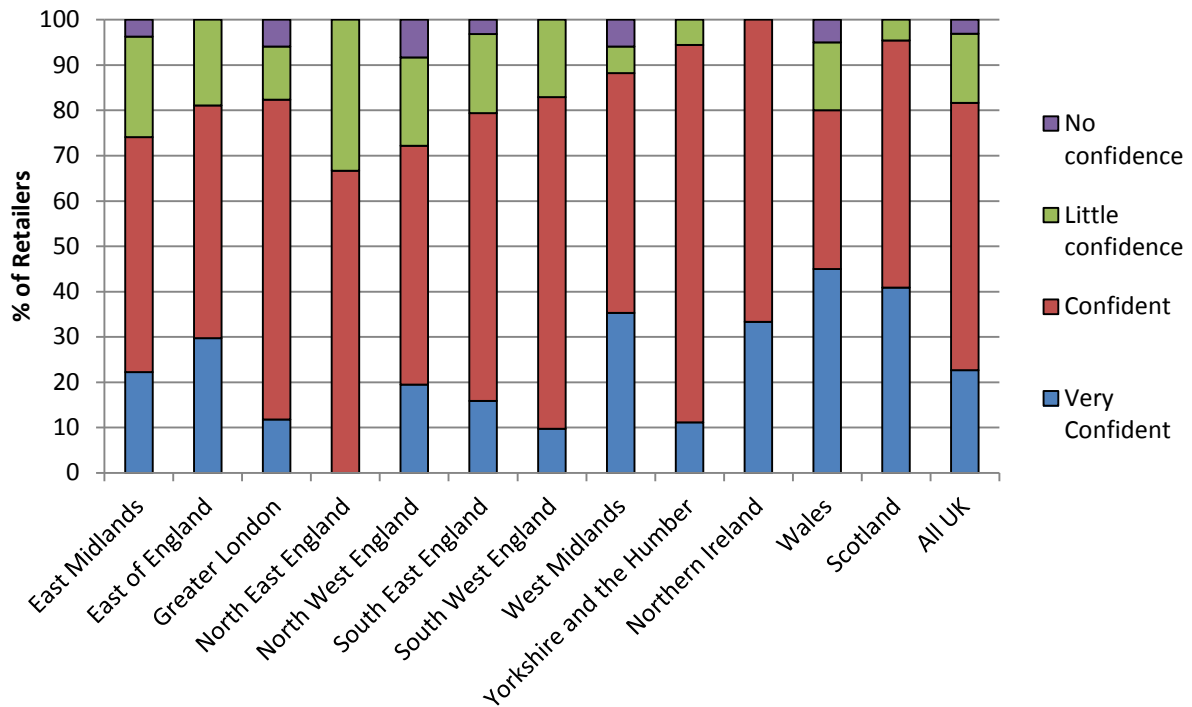


Fig 16. Percentages of retailers and their confidence level of inspectors

An alternative way of calculating the confidence level is by converting the categories to a value and taking the mean of those values. As the data provided by retailers is descriptive, such a transformation to numerical data does have its flaws and should therefore be viewed with caution.

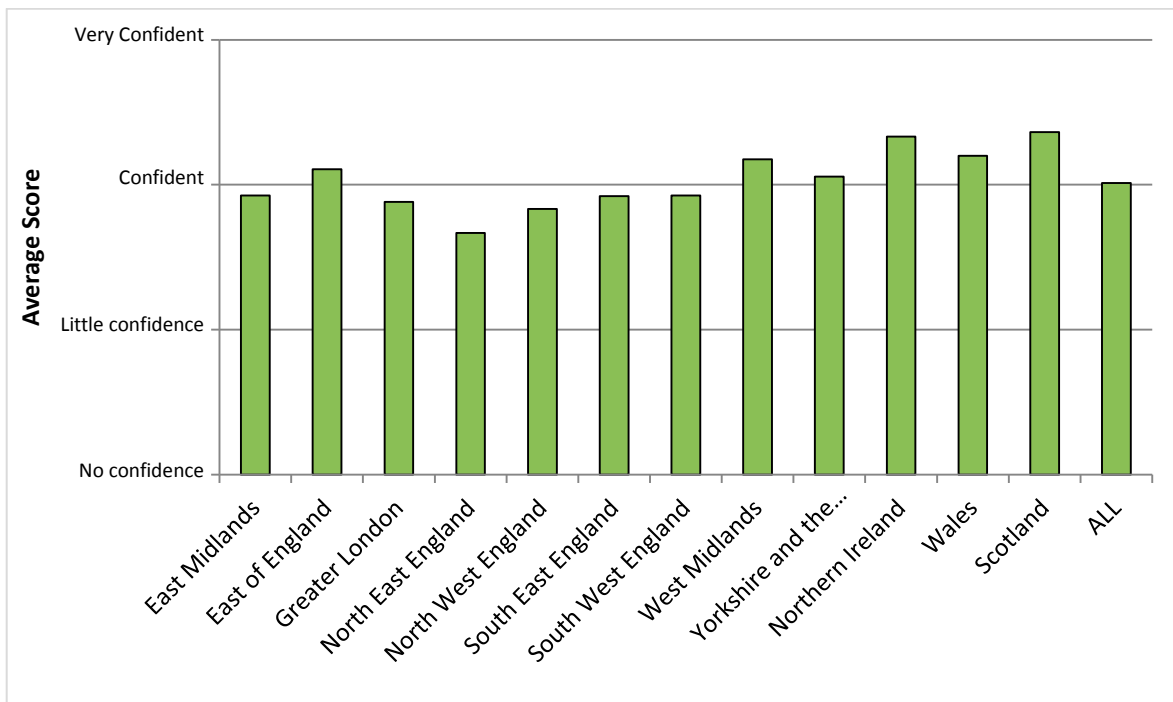


Fig 17. Mean confidence score given by retailers of their pet shop licence inspectors.

19 retailers provided other comments relating to this question. Of these, 15 provided comments relating to the lack of aquatic knowledge of inspectors, two made specific comments about inconsistent conditions between councils, two provided comments about the value for money of the pet shop licences while the final retailer was concerned about the inspector giving out dangerous advice:

“Was once told I must have fly spray in case I had any flies in summer. In a fish shop? (Must not be used near aquatics!!!)”

6. If any, which condition on your license is most annoying?

Why?

Retailers were asked to provide details on their most annoying pet shop licence condition. 21 retailers (one of them being a chain) provided answers to this question. Some of the responses given were not directly related to pet shop licence condition, but those that did included:

- Concerns of stocking densities set too low (3)
- Sales and/or purchase register (3)
- Conditions not relating to animal welfare – presence of cobwebs and rust, health and safety (2)
- Training requirements (1)
- Mandatory provision of care leaflets (1)
- Excessively long quarantine periods (1)
- Air temperature in shop (1)

The non pet shop licence condition comments included:

- Chain related concerns – cannot be licensed centrally, however, this contrasts with one comment suggesting that a particular branch did not need inspecting because another site had been inspected (3)
- Delay in the processing of applications (2)
- Cost (4)