

**Ipsos MORI**  
Social Research Institute

# **Openness in Animal Research**

**The public's views on openness and  
transparency in animal research**

4 November 2013

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# Summary

## 1. Introduction

In April 2013, Ipsos MORI was commissioned by Understanding Animal Research (UAR), on behalf of the Medical Research Council and the British Pharmacological Society, to conduct a public dialogue. The dialogue was co-funded by Sciencewise<sup>1</sup>, the UK's national centre for public dialogue in policy making involving science and technology issues. The aim was to understand the expectations of the general public with regard to transparency and openness in animal research. This report presents the findings from this dialogue.

The findings will feed into the development of a Concordat developed by a group of organisations involved in the funding, supporting and undertaking of animal research. This Concordat sets out the aims of the sector for greater openness and transparency surrounding animal research.

Points to note:

- The draft of the Concordat document will be taken to public consultation in Autumn 2013. This report is the findings of a public dialogue undertaken during the drafting process; this report does not represent the findings of formal consultation.
- The Home Office is conducting a review of section 24 of the Animals Scientific Procedures Act and will run a consultation on this later in 2013.<sup>2</sup> The Home Office consultation is relevant as it links to the legal requirements relating to information provision for the animal research sector in future. However, this current public dialogue on openness is entirely separate from the Home Office's work.

## Dialogue design

- **3 locations** (Manchester, London, Cardiff).
- **Two reconvened Events** in each location (Event 1 and Event 2), each lasting one day.
- Between 15 and 18 people attended each Event, within a mixture of ages and gender and ethnicity broadly representative of each area.
- At **Event 1**, Participants were given:

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<sup>1</sup> Sciencewise is funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). Sciencewise aims to improve policy making involving science and technology across Government by increasing the effectiveness with which public dialogue is used, and encouraging its wider use where appropriate to ensure public views are considered as part of the evidence base.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.understandinganimalresearch.org.uk/assets/document/1A3AE8C7-C2CF-2154-45CFFDC0B59B9FB6/concordat-on-openness.pdf>

- 5 handouts on the what, why and who of animal research
- Quiz with facts and figures
- Presentation about the range of views which exist about the suffering and benefits of animal research. Participants discussed the issues in small groups and in plenary sessions.
- Additional expert advice and information was provided by staff from the RSPCA's scientific welfare team.
- At **Event 2**, participants viewed
  - Videos showing opinions on the challenges for openness and transparency in the sector; with views from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC), and the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV).
  - Training videos of some mild procedures & care and handling of animals.
  - Video provided by BUAV of undercover footage taken of animal researchers plus some written slides drawing attention to bad practice.
- **Animal activists and scientists** were not invited to the workshops. Their views were captured in a broader stakeholder engagement process in advance of the dialogue to feed into the development of the stimulus materials and topic coverage of the workshops. This stakeholder engagement comprised:-
  - Iterative development process with the project Oversight Group<sup>3</sup> on the information required for dialogue materials, including several waves of comments and amends to materials.
  - Workshop including stakeholders outside the Oversight Group – stakeholders included here were animal welfare groups, researchers in the public and private sector, regulators and medical research charities. In addition, phone interviews were conducted with anti-vivisection and animal rights groups.
  - More engagement with some stakeholders, in particular BUAV, who added detailed requests for stimulus materials to be used and provided some materials themselves including undercover footage of bad practice in animal research.

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<sup>3</sup> The Oversight Group (OG) was comprised of individuals from the following organisations: Understanding Animal Research (UAR), the Medical Research Council (MRC), the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). All communications of the OG also included the Sciencewise Dialogue Engagement Specialist.

**Please note:** this report relates to **qualitative research**; we identify where different views and arguments are present within the population, the strength of these views, and the arguments or other evidence which shift or change perceptions. However, we cannot assume that the views of this small group will be reflected in the same proportions within the population at large. The value of this qualitative work is to explore the nuances within public views which lead to better understanding.

## 2. Public knowledge and perceptions of animal research

### Where the public start from

Participants were interested in the issues around animal research and openness and transparency. In each location, a few asked questions about the dialogue process and the aims of the study. *Why does any sector want to be more open?* They needed reassurance as to why the sector was engaging with the public now, and what benefits the sector (and the public) would get from openness.

Participants began the day with very limited knowledge around animal research.

There are significant **misconceptions**; that *most* animal research is done for **cosmetics** or late stage **preclinical trials**, or on **higher non-human primates**.

There was no real understanding of **who** does animal research or on **what** animals.

Most participants felt that the key question for the public to consider in animal research was to weigh up the **suffering to animals versus perceived benefits** – and they do not currently have enough knowledge about either side of the question to join the debate.

Overall, participants expected two things of openness and transparency.

- The sector to subject itself to **external scrutiny** regarding animal welfare from groups who do not have a vested interest in the research process. This was felt to be the best guarantee of a genuine desire for openness.
- They also wanted the sector to **communicate** more openly about its activities.

On seeing the BUAV undercover footage, participants became very angry about **malpractice**. They were particularly struck by what they saw as **callous or inhumane** behaviour from researchers.

### Were there differences between different groups?

There were very few differences between locations when it came to perceptions, needs and the principles which were chosen as important. Overall, results were homogenous. There were some small differences:

- Those in higher socio-demographic groups with higher levels of education tended to want more detailed and nuanced information.
- Younger participants tended to start the sessions saying they felt very distant from the sector, but soon became engaged.

- Middle aged participants tended to start the sessions saying that they were very concerned and disapproved of animal research, but through the days tended to modify this view.

### 3. Key information on animal research

Participants wanted information on the **specifics** of animal research in order to feel qualified to join any debate about features of the sector.

In some cases this is specific **information** about what happens; but also there is a requirement for detailed explanations of how researchers **weigh up** different considerations when deciding on the kind of research to do.

#### Key information includes:

- Specifics on **animal use**; by organisation per year; actual numbers and percentages of different animal species used; and severity of procedures conducted. Information in arrears, explaining how many animals had actually been used against how many planned to be used.
- Additional information about **genetically altered animals**: why are they used and why the rise in numbers? Reassurance about public health concerns such as genetically altered animals entering the food chain.
- The **outcomes** for the animals (death/use in other procedures, etc); to demonstrate that the life of each animal has been tracked and animal lives are respected.
- What are the **3Rs**? More evidence of how these are considered in research design. Plus, more information in the public domain about alternatives to animal use.
- Much more information on animal care and welfare before, during and after procedures. Information about the seniority of the animal care and **welfare officer** and how able he/she is, in practice, to stand up for the welfare of animals.
- Levels of suffering, more detailed than mild/moderate/severe, with lots of examples including **images** of typical procedures in the public domain.
- How different sorts of physical and psychological suffering were considered for different animals and at what points during the process animals are assessed to see whether the **projected level of suffering is actually taking place, or whether the suffering is worse**.
- How animals are killed (and are there alternatives?) by institution.
- **Publication** of findings: at minimum, reports on finished projects from an animal welfare point of view.

### 4. Constructive suggestions for openness: the need for external scrutiny

A **prerequisite** for the animal research sector calling itself open and transparent is that it should subject itself to **external scrutiny** by those who have an interest in the **animals' welfare**, rather than by those who have a vested financial or scientific interest in the research being carried out. Government, the animal welfare sector and organisations involved in animal research all have a role to play.

## Home Office role:

- Participants assumed that government regulation is already in place; though some overestimate the level of scrutiny from the Home Office and the severity of punishments for infringing regulations.
- The number of Home Office inspectors seems few and participants are concerned that with few inspectors and self-reporting, infringements will not be picked up. It is important to ensure the sector and regulators are not 'cosy'. The idea that self-reporting forms an important part of ensuring regulations are adhered to was seen more as a negative, with an assumption that many infringements, and particularly the most serious ones, would not be reported – rather than being seen as welcome evidence that the sector is policing itself.
- Request from some that the detailed reasoning for notices of infringement be made available.
- Participants would also like to see very severe punishments for infringements.

## Role of the sector in subjecting itself to voluntary scrutiny:

Participants were presented with a series of ideas on how the sector themselves could be more open and transparent. The suggestions that were most salient with the general public in terms of building trust and confidence were:

- Potential for the sector to pay for external scrutiny, e.g. from animal welfare organisations.
- Licences to be subject to FOI requests and also placed online for a period for comment before being granted. They should be in layman's language, have details on the level of animal suffering and animal welfare arrangements, and the Home Office should take comments into account before granting licences.
- Animal Care and Welfare officers should be protected if they report suspected wrongdoing i.e. whistleblowing and given seniority within the sector
- The idea of CCTV in labs would be welcomed; though participants recognised it is challenging to film everything, and maybe too invasive of researcher privacy, there is a good opportunity to use some film to increase number of spot checks on the sector.
- Numbers and severity of procedures published and analysed by institution as well as information with regard to level of suffering and welfare arrangements.
- Organisations, especially in the private sector, should publish details of the research they do in non-EU countries.
- League tables of research institutions that conduct animal research are not seen as essential but could be used by the Home Office rather than for the public.

## 5. Constructive suggestions for openness: communication

Participants noted that the sector should aim to **create a wider understanding** of animal research within society.

They felt that the following ideas would help the public be better prepared to have an informed discussion about animal research:

- Explaining the **weaknesses and limitations** of animal research. Participants wanted this in the context of wider education about the 3Rs and a commitment that the sector has signed up to these in practice rather than doing as little as is necessary to meet the requirements.
- Explaining the harms of animal research; specifically the **nature and level of suffering** experienced by animals.
- Explaining the **benefits** of animal research; both those realised already and those which are less certain or may take time to be realised.
- Helping raise **awareness** of the use of animals, and respecting the sacrifice of animal life, for instance by adding something to packaging for **medicines** (a small logo, for example) to demonstrate the role of animal research in the development process.
- **Public access to laboratories** but only as visitors, and as an addition to other approaches to openness: this was not felt to be enough on its own and is an educational tool rather than an aspect of scrutiny.

## 6. The medium as well as the message

The channel through which the public learns about animal research is likely to affect their views. Participants wanted to see information come through the following channels:

- **Online:** participants were not a very critical public when it came to information sources. Internet literacy levels vary widely; many UK internet users only have a smart phone, so detailed information may be hard to convey.
- **School curriculum and university education:** suggestions included universities giving Tedx<sup>4</sup> talks or sharing information with adults.
- **Face to face local involvement:** open days but also the chance for local people to sit as lay people on ethics panels.
- **TV:** such as documentaries, which discuss animal research from a number of different sides.

## 7. Conclusions

### Public support for openness

Overall, participants in this dialogue were keen that the sector should be open, and welcome its aim to be more transparent. They understand that the reasons for a lack of transparency are possibly historical, and believe there is an inherent difficulty of communicating about a sector which involves animal suffering.

However, if the public are to believe that the sector is genuinely committed to openness, there are several key principles the sector must adhere to.

1. **Clear messaging** from the sector as to why openness is important.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://tedxtalks.ted.com/> TED is a nonprofit devoted to 'Ideas Worth Spreading'. Tedx talks involve locally organised speeches from experts and innovative thinkers with the aim to stimulate dialogue in their chosen subject area.

2. The public want the sector to demonstrate its commitment to openness by creating greater **scrutiny of itself**.
3. After the dialogue had revealed the number of nuanced arguments which exist about the harms and benefits of animal research, participants felt that the public need to be **educated about these nuances** in order to be able to weigh up the harm and benefits of animal research.

## How to communicate with the public?

Different publics are likely to need different approaches.

- For stakeholders and informed lay public:
  - Give evidence of independent scrutiny.
  - Allow comments on licences before the Home Office accepts them
  - Provide clear and detailed information about how many animals are actually used and how much suffering is caused, for what purposes and under what circumstances, by institution.
- For the general public:
  - Increase awareness that the sector exists.
  - Bust the myths, namely:
    - that research is done for cosmetics,
    - that animals do not suffer,
    - it is all vital medical research,
    - it is all done to the highest possible standards,
    - you can use great apes,
    - the sector has no regard for animal welfare,
    - all procedures are severe, all procedures are mild.
  - Give information about how many animals are actually used, how much suffering is caused, and crucially how and why they are killed.
  - Where possible, allow the public into research establishments and specifically labs where experiments are undertaken, in order to learn more.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

In 2012, over 50 organisations involved in the funding, supporting and undertaking of animal research committed to developing a series of principles and objectives that would bring a greater level of transparency and openness to animal research.<sup>5</sup>



<sup>5</sup> <http://www.understandinganimalresearch.org.uk/policy/concordat-on-openness-on-animal-research>

This set of principles is planned to be written into a 'Concordat' document which will be drafted in Autumn 2013, and put out to public consultation before review and publication in early 2014.

The members of the group working on this Concordat recognise the importance of public perceptions of openness and transparency on controversial scientific issues and public trust. The group considers public support and goodwill to be a key "licence to operate" issue for the life sciences sector, given the fact that a significant amount of animal research is "done in the public's name" (i.e. is publicly funded). Therefore, evidence to suggest a decline in public support<sup>6</sup> surrounding animal research is a key issue for Concordat group members which made it even more important to explore the views of the public and establish what they want to know about and what they see as the key issues for openness and transparency.

The ultimate aim of the sector being more open and transparent is to boost public awareness of, and create more informed debate about, animal research. Concordat group members hope that in a climate of openness and transparency, better discussions can happen, and indeed that the public might then be more supportive of animal research as an integral part of scientific discovery.

In order to inform the content of the Concordat document, the group members wanted to understand what the **public's** view on openness and transparency in animal research would be. In early 2013 a **public dialogue** was commissioned to inform the content going into the draft of the Concordat document itself. This report explains the findings from the public dialogue and gives recommendations for the issues which are most important to the public.

Other pieces of research and consultation are set to take place around the Concordat process and within the same timescale. First, the **public consultation on the draft Concordat itself** will take place in late 2013. This report looks only at the findings from the public dialogue, carried out in advance of this formal consultation; it is important to remember that this report does not represent the findings of formal consultation, but of public dialogue.

Second, the **Home Office is conducting a review of section 24 of the Animals Scientific Procedures Act** (which prohibits the disclosure of confidential information relating to the use of animals in scientific procedures) and will run a consultation on this later in 2013. The Home Office consultation is relevant as it is likely to help set the context for the final Concordat document. Certainly, results and outcomes of the review will set the legal context for the provision of information by the Home Office and organisations involved in animal research in future. However, this current public dialogue on openness is entirely separate from the Home Office's work. Though a representative of the Home Office formed part of our wider stakeholder group for the dialogue, the dialogue's content did not focus on the legal detail of the Freedom of Information Act or Section 24 and the report you are now reading is not a

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<sup>6</sup> A poll conducted last year by Ipsos MORI revealed a small decline in public support for animal research and trust in its practitioners. The final report can be accessed at: <http://www.understandinganimalresearch.org.uk/assets/document/797785A1-AA27-182B-12999EF2AEC75F46/ipsos-mori-poll-view.pdf>

comprehensive look at public views of these elements of law. There are principles which emerged in the dialogue which may be relevant to the Home Office's review; we have indicated throughout the report where there is learning for the Home Office.

## 1.2 Objectives

Members of the group developing the Concordat requested UAR to initiate a public dialogue. This was undertaken on behalf of the Medical Research Council and the British Pharmacological Society and co-funded by Sciencewise<sup>7</sup>. An Oversight Group (OG) was convened to guide the dialogue process.

In this context, the public dialogue aimed to better understand what the public consider to be openness and transparency with regard to animal research. Ultimately, findings from the public dialogue will help draft a series of principles and objectives which, when implemented, Concordat members believe can help bring about greater public confidence in work which the sector does.

The dialogue was designed to cover all aspects of openness pertaining to animal research, to consider what the public think they themselves, or other individuals or groups would want and expect from organisations in terms of how they perform and present their work.

The following aims were considered throughout the public dialogue:

- To understand public expectations of openness and transparency around the use of animals in research
- To explore what information the public want to receive on the use of animals in research, and how it should be communicated to support greater openness and transparency, including, for example, information on how research is regulated.
- To identify aspects of current practice by the bioscience sector that are considered secretive or hidden, understanding why this is and what would need to change to be considered open and transparent.
- To consider what future work could be done to address openness and transparency issues for the life science sector in the future.

Additionally, a set of secondary objectives were drawn up, namely:

- To explore possible causes for changes in public opinion around animal research in 2012: looking at polling data from that year.
- To explore whether location within the UK or other demographic factors could have any bearing on how the public view the use of animals in research.

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<sup>7</sup> The Sciencewise Expert Resource Centre (Sciencewise-ERC) is the UK's national centre for public dialogue in policy making involving science and technology issues.

These secondary objectives were initially viewed as areas where findings would be of interest, but were recognised as being likely to be out of reach of this dialogue, due to the small numbers of people involved in the research process.

### 1.3 Sample

The public dialogue process involved 54 recruited participants from different backgrounds across three locations (London, Cardiff and Manchester). 18 participants took part in each of the first workshops, with attendance in each of the reconvened sessions between 15 and 18.

Location	Number of participants	
	Event 1	Event 2
London	18	18
Cardiff	18	15
Manchester	18	17

Participants were recruited by specialist qualitative Ipsos MORI recruiters. Recruitment was carried out face-to-face on the street. Quotas for gender, age, socio-economic group and ethnicity were set to ensure participation of individuals from a range of backgrounds reflective of the areas they came from and the broad diversity of the UK population. Screening questions based on interest and knowledge regarding scientific and medical research and animal rights activism were also set, and we screened out those who were actively involved in animal rights or animal research, or particular experts on the topic at hand<sup>8</sup>. This was in order to gather a heterogeneous group of the public who at the same time did not include unusually informed people. Instead, the views of scientists, researchers and animal welfare and animal rights organisations were included in the dialogue by a process of stakeholder engagement undertaken in the drafting of the workshop materials (see section on materials below).

Participants received a financial incentive to encourage participation in the workshops.

### 1.4 Methodology

Public dialogue allows participants the freedom to express the issues that are salient to them as well as to respond to stimulus and gather information at their own pace about complex issues; it allows them to draw in information from experts; plus it allows participants to think about their own perspective, deliberate with others, and consider the views of other groups in society.

Day-long reconvened workshops (conducted in three different locations) allowed participants enough time to express their spontaneous views about animal research and reflect on issues pertaining to openness and transparency. The workshops were deliberative in nature, so that participants were given information about what is

<sup>8</sup> Recruitment screener document available on request.

involved in animal research as the workshop progressed, and encouraged to develop their views in light of the information provided.

- At **Event 1**, participants were given:
  - A **presentation** which outlined the main purposes of animal research<sup>9</sup>, and range of different views with regard to its value, benefit, efficacy, and impact on animals: this gave participants the information they needed to consider what areas were under discussion.<sup>10</sup> Participants spent time working in groups and plenary to discuss implications for openness and transparency.
  - Discussion of '**how, who, why handouts**' of animal research: these short vignettes - each describing a particular aspect of animal research including level of suffering - allowed participants to think more deeply about openness and transparency, and how this might be achieved.
  - A **quiz** about animal research: this task started participants thinking about how the sector operates with regard to animal research, the type of species of animal used and level of suffering.
  - **Presentation** about the range of views which exist about the harm and benefits of animal research.
  - Additional expert advice and information was provided by staff from the RSPCA's scientific welfare team.

**In-between event task:** participants were given a choice to either conduct independent research into animal research or interview a friend or family member. At the start of the reconvened session people fed back what they had learned and what pieces of information they felt were most useful.

- At **Event 2**, participants viewed a series of filmed videos, namely:
  - "**Talking head**" **films** of a representative of the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC), an academic research facility – the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), and an anti-vivisection group – the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV), the different viewpoints expressed in these videos encouraged participants to think about how openness and transparency might occur.
  - **Training footage for animal technologists of animal research procedures** (e.g. how to handle animals and administer an injection)

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<sup>9</sup> It is important to note that despite informing participants of the purposes of animal research i.e. fundamental and applied medical/veterinary research and regulatory testing of non-medical products, participants did struggle to grasp this distinction. While this does not change the scope of this dialogue it does illustrate that the general public find animal research to be a topic that is unfamiliar and challenging to engage with.

<sup>10</sup> While participants were reminded that the rights and wrongs of animal research fell outside of the scope of the research, it was evident that ethical issues, in part, influenced thinking when forming opinion on openness and transparency.

enabled participants to discuss how the sector might demonstrate that such practices were adhered to.

- **Film of animal researchers** covertly taken in several research facilities in the UK – this video was provided by the BUAV and helped participants to think about how the sector could reassure the public that the risk of malpractice is minimised (or that all practicable steps are taken to prevent malpractice). Additionally, it helped them to consider the impact of imagery on their earlier views.
- **Proposals for openness and transparency.** Participants were given a list of suggestions for different ways to increase openness and transparency. By exploring the benefits and drawbacks of the different proposals, they further refined the principles of openness and transparency they had been developing throughout the two days.

The dialogue materials including presentations, “how, who, why” handout and discussion guides are available [here](#).

## 1.5 Materials development

To ensure that information presented to the participants and the framing of the topic would stand up to external scrutiny as being as far as possible reasonable and unbiased, a stakeholder consultation stage took place prior to the public dialogue. As well as providing insight into the extent to which the sector is open and transparent, feedback from this stage was used to inform the stimulus and other information presented to participants during the dialogue. The process of engagement involved a range of activities: Ipsos MORI facilitated a workshop<sup>11</sup> as well as conducting telephone and face-to-face discussions, allowing stakeholders to input into the content of dialogue materials. Utilising stakeholder input, the materials were reviewed and amended until a broad consensus was reached amongst the OG on what information would be presented during the workshops.

Several anti-vivisection and animal rights organisations wrote to Ipsos MORI during the development of the workshop materials, querying the purpose of the project, the motivations of UAR, and how decisions were being taken on the materials. A small number of animal protection organisations declined to be involved in the development of materials or in the project as a whole because they did not want to demonstrate support for the Concordat group commissioning the project.<sup>12</sup>

Further stakeholders expressed reservations but remained involved in the discussions of materials. BUAV in particular placed some conditions on their involvement which included their provision of footage of undercover investigations for participants to watch, and inclusion of several suggestions on openness and transparency. We were happy to include these materials for balance within the dialogue. BUAV also requested that Ipsos MORI should have final say on materials

<sup>11</sup> Stakeholders who attended the workshop were representatives of the British Heart Foundation, Lilly, The Wellcome Trust, the National Institute of Medical Research, the RSPCA, the Home Office, Parkinson's UK and UAR.

<sup>12</sup> These organisations were Animal Aid, the National Anti-Vivisection Society and the Lord Dowding Fund for Humane Research.

used. However, while Ipsos MORI had oversight of materials production, the client Oversight Group took final decision on the materials used, as is standard practice with our work.

## 1.6 A note on interpretation of qualitative data

Qualitative research approaches (including public dialogue workshops) are used to shed light on why people hold particular views, rather than how many people hold those views. The results are intended to be illustrative rather than statistically reliable and, as such, do not permit statements to be made about the extent to which something is happening. This report provides detailed and exploratory findings that give insight into the perceptions, thoughts and feelings of people. It does not give statistical evidence from a quantifiably valid sample.

It is not always possible in qualitative research to provide a precise or useful indication of the prevalence of a certain view, due to the relatively small number of participants generally involved (as compared with the larger respondent bases involved with quantitative studies). You should not read this and attempt to extrapolate the views of proportions of the qualitative group to the population at large.

The value of qualitative work is to identify the issues which bear future investigation. Therefore we use different analysis techniques to identify how important an idea is, combining the views of all our facilitators and comparing notes across all events, looking for patterns of thought and behaviour.

In reporting, we state the strength of feeling about a particular point rather than the number of people who have expressed that thought. We have sometimes indicated what was said by “most”, “many”, “a few” or “a minority” of participants to give an idea of the ebb and flow of the discussion. However, it is important to remember that the number of times an idea is mentioned is not the only way to judge how important it is. For example, ideas can be mentioned a number of times because they reflect ‘received wisdom’ on a topic, but a minority view expressed later in the discussion can be the real signal of an emergent view or trend.

Where views apply only to a subset of participants, e.g. participants in Manchester, we have highlighted this in the text, as we draw out any differences by region.

Another consideration in the interpretation of qualitative data is the role of perceptions. Different outlooks on an issue make up a considerable proportion of the evidence presented in this study. It is therefore important to bear in mind that although these perceptions may not always be factually accurate, they represent the truth for those who hold these views. Even when participants have been given agreed information by an expert or facilitators, their views may not reflect the views of experts on a subject; it is valuable to understand how information is filtered through existing perceptions of an issue.

Verbatim comments have been included in this report to illustrate and highlight key points, i.e. those views either shared by a large number of participants or reflecting the strong views of a smaller subset. Where verbatim quotes are used, they have been anonymised and attributed by location and event (1 or 2), e.g. – London, E1.

## 2. Public knowledge and perceptions of animal research

### Summary

This chapter explains the (limited) levels of public knowledge around animal research; perceptions of the types of animals that are used, procedures and the aftermath of the research; perceptions of regulation and reaction to information that was given to them and the wider dialogue process.

### Key findings

- There are significant **misconceptions**; that most animal research is done for **cosmetics** or late stage **preclinical trials**, or on **higher primates**.
- No real understanding of **who** does animal research or on **what** animals. Most participants felt that the key question for the public to consider in openness and transparency in animal research was to weigh up the **harms to animals versus perceived benefits** – and they don't currently have enough knowledge about either side of the question to join the debate.
- Overall, participants wanted the sector to subject itself to **external scrutiny** on animal welfare from groups who did not have a vested interest in the research process. This was felt to be the best guarantee of a genuine desire for openness.
- They also wanted the sector to **communicate** more openly about its activities.
- On seeing the BUAV undercover footage, participants were angry about **malpractice**. They were particularly struck by what they saw as **callous or inhumane** behaviour from researchers.
- In each location, some felt **cynical** about the dialogue process and the aims of the study. *Why does any sector want to be more open?*
- There were very few differences between locations when it came to perceptions, needs and the principles which were chosen as important.

### Implications for communicating with the public

- Increase awareness that the sector exists
- Explain more about the types of research that exist and the different organisations which conduct research
- Explain the range and number of animals used
- Give information about how many animals are actually used, how much suffering is caused, and crucially how and why they are killed
- Engage, and be seen to engage, animal welfare groups so that they can scrutinise standards in animal research
- Explain credible reasons why the sector would want to be more transparent prior to outlining how this will look
- Remember that for the public, the perceived motivations of the researchers are very salient.

## 2.1 What does the public know about animal research?

### 2.1.1 Types of research, types of animals

Across the discussions, there was **little detailed understanding** of research involving animals, both in terms of the animals that are involved, the different types of organisations that are responsible for carrying out the research, the role of industry, academia, government and other interests, and the scrutiny and regulation of the sector. While the participants involved in this dialogue did not provide a representative sample of the views of the UK population, it is fair to assume that their start points for thinking about animal research also reflect the levels of awareness of the public. From this group we can certainly identify attitudes which are present in the public as a whole.

Initially, many expressed inaccurate and outdated beliefs around *why* research is carried out on animals; many participants told us they thought research was done for the benefit of **cosmetic products**. None spontaneously mentioned the use of procedures to develop vaccines, toxicity testing for chemicals, or basic bioscience studies to help better understand human or animal biology. Even when presented with the facts that cosmetics research is no longer legal in the European Union, many still kept referring to 'cosmetic testing' when discussing animal research later in the sessions.

*You can stand on your high horse, not eat meat and be against it. But at the end of the day I use the medicines. On the other hand using it for 'cosmetics' is completely out of order.*

**Cardiff, E1**

*What I'm saying is I don't think we should have to put our hands in our pockets for [regulation] and the 'cosmetics' and pharma institutes make money off it.*

**London, E2**

The only other type of animal research which was mentioned spontaneously was late stage **preclinical trials**. The assumption was that animal research would be done to create a 'go/no go decision' about new drugs. There was some confusion about the way these types of experiments produce their data. Many thought the focus was on whether the drug would work to 'cure' the animal of a relevant illness, rather than, for example, experimenting to identify how far, and at what dosage, a drug might be safe in humans. This was significant because it shows a lack of understanding about some of the assumptions and processes of scientific research which will lie under any research design decision; the public may need to be informed about these basics in order to join a debate about animal research.

With this in mind, it is harder for the public to understand animal research that does not have a clear and definitive outcome – for example genetic modification or research that involves surgical procedures without a particular product or vaccine in mind. There is a clear need for an understanding of the harms and benefits of such research – not only the extent and depth of the suffering it involves and the number

of animals used but also what the ultimate aims of the research are and how far they may be from the hoped for outcome.

*But if they're going to find a cure for cancer, kill a million mice! As long as they're not messing about with them.*

**Cardiff, E1**

Another issue that surprised participants was the *types* of animals that were used for research and their relative prevalence. As discussed, many thought that larger animals were the main focus of research both because of individual stories in the media about excessive suffering, as well as a belief that more viable data could be extracted from larger animals, as they have closer genetic comparability to humans. The proportion of **higher non-human primates** used in research was often overestimated.

Therefore, when they were shown data that showed that 1,453 monkeys were used in research as opposed to over 2 million mice, there was surprise at the relatively low extent of primate use in research. When told that research was done on fish because of our close genetic similarities to them there was surprise; most assumed that there was little genetic comparability between humans and fish.

*I think they should make us aware of how similar those animals actually are to us...a mouse to me. There's actually a big difference – I'd like to see how similar our bodies actually are.*

**London, E1**

This also represents a key area where the public need more information.

*Make a distinction about the types of animals that are being used. The animals that you get for that type of research. This would make a big difference in how people view it.*

**London, E1**

*I'm surprised that there are so many fish. What is it that's so special about beagles? Why are cats the least used?*

**Manchester, E1**

Participants were largely unaware that some animal research was carried out for diagnostic purposes and were surprised when told that **genetically altered** animals were purpose bred for research. In fact, some were concerned when told the number of genetically altered animals was increasing; these concerns tended to be around the permanent effects on the genetic composition of the animals in question, but there were also concerns about the effect of such an increase on the food chain – many did not realise that such research is carried out in controlled isolation and the animals were not returned to the wild or used agriculturally.

*There's genetically altered animals? I hope not.*

**Cardiff, E1**

These concerns about genetically altered animals are similar to those we typically hear in other dialogues where genetic modification of animals or plants is discussed. Participants want reassurance that genetic modification will not cause unforeseen consequences.

*Have there ever been instances where animals have escaped and caused rampant disease? Like the movies, super intelligent rats.”*

**Cardiff, E1**

Participants knew little but had a desire to be more informed. Specifically, they did not understand how genetic alteration might work in practice; what such an animal might look like, and any potential disfigurements or illnesses it might have. It was crucial for them to understand the quality of life that such an animal might have in order to form an opinion on the value of such scientific procedures.

One key issue across all groups was what happens to the animals **after the experiments** are carried out. Though most had given this little thought, on reflection they assumed that the animals would be ‘retired’ though there was no fixed conception of how this would work in practice. When told that most animals were killed after the procedures, there was concern; despite being told that this was done humanely many were still adamant that it was a very serious harm to shorten an animal’s life unnecessarily.

### **2.1.2 Who does animal research and how is it regulated?**

There was a very low awareness of the structures and organisations of animal research. Participants did not know who the key players in the sector are, or how animal research is funded. There was little understanding that different organisations might do different types of procedures, for example: that contract laboratories exist, that suppliers breed animals for research institutes; that medical charities fund animal research; or that university departments conduct this sort of research regularly. Most assumed that laboratories are all run by private sector organisations.

*Never have I heard before today that public tax money goes towards animal research for humans.*

**London, E1**

*I didn't think nearly half the research would be done for breeding genetically altered animals! I thought the bulk of it would be safety testing but that's only 2%.*

**Manchester, E1**

Participants showed little spontaneous awareness of the wider debates, proponents and opponents of animal research in the wider media and in the animal welfare or animal protection sectors. A minority mentioned PETA and its campaign against fur. The RSPCA, present at the events, was also well known. Beyond this there was no mention of other salient bodies or organisations. There was also little sense that there might be a collection of different animal protection organisations, proposing a spectrum of different views, on the subject of animal research.

*Oh! Hang on, is BUAV a company that doesn't like animal research at all?*

**London, E2**

*(after considerable discussion of a 'talking head' interview provided by BUAV)*

It was also assumed that the sector is well regulated. This was not based on specific knowledge about regulation but from a general assumption that: all UK business and science is nowadays regulated; that serious issues like causing animals harm would naturally be regulated. Also, very few individuals could remember any specific examples of bad practice so assumed that regulation was doing its work.

### **2.1.3 Is the sector secretive?**

There was, however, a feeling that the sector is secretive, simply because the issues it deals with are inherently distasteful. Some felt that this is because of a lack of public appetite for engaging with issues around animal research. Participants pointed out that this in itself would cause the public to disengage and that the sector would then be discreet about what it does.

*I think everyone knows that it goes on but you try not to think about it too much. I think you don't want to think about suffering.*

**Manchester, E1**

Many participants had preconceptions that the animal research sector was automatically allowed to treat animals very badly; that welfare standards are very low; and that levels of suffering in all animal procedures are extremely high; and that the majority of procedures cause a great deal of harm and suffering to larger mammals. When participants were asked to go away and look for information about animal research in between Event 1 and Event 2, they sometimes came back with specific media reports of painful and invasive procedures, which conditioned some of their responses.

*Testing on cats eyes – I know that cats have their eyes cut out at Cardiff university<sup>13</sup>.*

**Cardiff, E1**

Participants felt that their estimates of the extent of the suffering were probably conservative, and that an ever increasing number of animals are being used, with an increasingly profound amount of suffering being inflicted. A few participants challenged stimulus materials which described mild, moderate and severe procedures and suggested that we had 'watered down' the descriptions. (In fact, these had been designed by the Oversight Group to provide a reflection of average types of procedure).

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/kitten-experiments-cardiff-university-researchers-1156779>

*If that's how they can kill them then there must be larger animals. They must be going through worse more severe methods of killing them.*

London, E2

On hearing about a range of different procedures, they were surprised that some animal research is mild, and non-invasive, and does not involve a succession of painful procedures that cause lasting harm to the animals.

*That's the image that I have in my head. All the beagles lined up smoking.*<sup>14</sup>

Cardiff, E1

The perceived lack of available information about animal research seemed to confirm the suspicion that the true scale is worse than the public's perception of it. This was based on the principle expressed by some participants that, if the true nature and scale of suffering was less than the public perception, then it would have been in the interest of those who regulate the sector to clarify things, and they would have done so by now.



However, though there was a belief that the sector was secretive, participants did not necessarily argue, at least in the early parts of the discussion, that it should be more **transparent**. Some felt that the reason for this secrecy was that they were being protected from the worst news by those in charge of the sector, and such information, which may be harrowing, particularly for younger people, should not be ‘imposed’

<sup>14</sup> <http://iconicphotos.wordpress.com/2012/06/30/smoking-beagles/>

upon the public. That said, they felt that information on such animal research should be made available to those with an appetite for it.

*Not everyone wants to know. We all stick our heads into the sand sometimes. But some people do want to know. Joe Bloggs might not want to know but Mrs Bloggs might.*

**Cardiff, E1**

In addition, some believed that this secrecy is driven by a sense of self-protection, both by the wider sector as well as those who work within it. There was a sense of strength of feeling against animal research and participants felt activists might want to take direct action to stop research on animals, or at least to threaten those that do so.

*Are they being defensive because society is hostile to the work being carried out? I understand why they are defensive.*

**Cardiff, E1**

*I think if you were to bring it all out publicly there'd be a moral panic. People would say 'Don't test on animals' and they'd suffer eventually.*

**Manchester, E1**

Listening to the spontaneous language used by participants in early sessions, while most understood that we were talking about regulated animal use within science, a minority tended to conflate animal **research** with issues around animal **cruelty**. The issue of how animals should be treated in research was mixed up with the issue of mistreatment of pets and stray animals. This is significant, as it is an early indication that some members of the public are trying to identify the motivations of researchers when considering animal research, as well as thinking about what actually happens to the animals. It will be important to explain the research culture to the public, and possibly also to educate researchers that the public start from a different standpoint, to facilitate communication. We discuss perceptions of the culture of research further in section 2.3 below.

*Sometimes people abuse animals – we call it abuse because it has a bad impact on animals, but then there are benefits too.*

**London, E2**

## **2.2 Some suspicion about the dialogue process itself and the aims of the study**

There was general positivity towards the principle of openness, which we shall deal with in subsequent chapters. However there was also some suspicion about why the sector would voluntarily *choose* to be more open. This was not because participants were overly suspicious of this sector, rather that they saw openness as something usually imposed on any sector from outside, rather than voluntarily engaged in by business, government or academia.

This caused some participants to critique the wider objectives of the dialogue itself. Why is this sector looking to be open *now*? What has changed?

*Talking about openness, it's a shame we are talking about that because it means they haven't been open before.*

**Cardiff, E1**

In the absence of information some supposed there must be a financial imperative for the sector to be more open; perhaps that laboratories who did not meet certain quality and safety standards would be penalised, or that those that constantly adhere to such standards might be viewed more favourably by those awarding particular contracts. However they also surmised that there would be additional administrative costs associated with a more transparent system, so again needed to know why the sector would go to the trouble of giving the public more information.

*Why do they want to be open now? They've been doing it for so long. Why is it, to increase sales or shares!*

**Cardiff, E1**

Therefore there is a clear need for the sector to demonstrate not just how it intends to be more open in the future, but also why – who will benefit from a more transparent system?

There was also a more subtle question posed by participants about the dialogue. Why does the sector canvass the views of the public? Why does it matter if the public do not support the sector – how would that stop the sector carrying out its work?

*What do they want? Do they want to be liked?*

**London, E1**

Participants needed to hear about the value of openness to the public, to the sector and to any other groups before they could comment sensibly on exactly what they wanted the sector to do. Some were concerned that a more open and transparent sector would draw unnecessary attention towards itself, by raising the profile of contentious debates between the sector and those opposed to animal research, so suggested that openness as an aim was in itself open to debate. The context for openness is important.

From the initial discussions, there were three areas where the public agreed that openness was in the public interest:

- The public, in part, pays for the regulation of the sector and should therefore have an informed view on how it operates.
- In the absence of objective information about the sector, outdated ideas or the opinions of those at the opposite ends of the spectrum of views on the acceptability and/or need for animal use are the only source of information, and much of this is biased.

- Openness would encourage researchers and the organisations they work for towards best practice.

Participants (in common with participants in many dialogues) wanted assurance that their contribution would feed into the wider Concordat process. One participant took part in a presentation of findings to the Concordat group and gave his impressions of the events from the participant perspective. Beyond this, many participants wanted to be kept up to date with the results of the study and said that this would help them feel that the time they had invested had resulted in findings which the sector took on board.

*Will any changes come of this or is it just food for thought?*

**London, E2**

## 2.3 The range of views

### 2.3.1 Views changed throughout the days

Throughout the events, participants were given information about animal research and were asked for their views, particularly around the extent to which it differed from their preconceptions of what the sector looks like. (See summary of activities we carried out during the research, in Chapter 1).

An initial presentation aimed to illustrate the range of views about the ethics of animal research, and we aimed, where possible, to 'park' views on the rights and wrongs of the research itself, in order to discuss openness and transparency. For some, this was easier to do than for others, and a minority of participants in the first event were unable to move on from this discussion.

However, across all workshops we did notice that views towards animal research became more favourable through Event 1. This is partly a result of people becoming more familiar with information about the sector (which tends to breed favourability). The more information that participants were given about the scope and the scale of the sector, the more that participants were inclined towards supporting the sector and the principles behind animal research. There was a sense that much of this information was new to them, or, at least, had not been presented clearly to them before.

Nevertheless, by the end of Event 1, most participants were keen that the animal research sector should subject itself to **external scrutiny**. We give examples of what they wanted this to look like in Chapter 4.

They were also keen for the sector to take the initiative and become more open in terms of the way it **communicates**. We discuss this in Chapter 5.

By the reconvened event, most participants were discussing the sector's potential for becoming more open and transparent, rather than the rights and wrongs of animal research i.e. they were focussed on the dialogue's actual purpose.

However, when shown the BUAV film of undercover footage, many reverted to an oppositional stance in relation to animal research. The BUAV film focused attention on to where things go wrong:

- Examples of researchers seemingly breaking the law and getting away with it in the absence of proper regulation or scrutiny
- Examples of where the law has allowed through procedures which are wrongly categorised or cause more suffering than they should.

Many participants felt angry and disappointed. Some said they felt they were “back to square one” after having learned about, and become more supportive of, animal research, and now did not know what to think about any of the issues we had discussed.

Once they had recovered from their immediate emotional response, many complained that they did not know how to contextualise the information as they did not know what ordinary practice should look like. They suspected that they were watching very bad practice, but also pointed out that the film had been edited to demonstrate this, so were not sure how prevalent this behaviour was in the sector as a whole.

*The video was taken secretly to shock us – it was for that purpose. It looks cruel and things were happening which shouldn't happen, but it's important to bear in mind that that's the worst bits.*

**London, E2**

Nevertheless they were very affected emotionally, wanted to see bad practice punished, and were certainly less supportive of animal research.

*That was blatant cruelty, horrible.*

**Manchester, E2**

*I think my worst fears were realised in that film. Everything that I'd imagined that would be bad not only could happen but did happen. The people who did it, especially Imperial College, one of the biggest colleges in London, and all the support that I was getting for animal research I felt evaporated while I was watching that.*

**London, E2**

Attention turned with a stronger focus to how the sector could voluntarily subject itself to **external scrutiny** and to **stringent regulation**.

Those who viewed the film asked where the regulators were. Why had this bad practice not been identified and stamped out? Where was the welfare officer within each institution? Participants were also particularly struck by what they saw as callous behaviour from researchers. As well as the specific harms to animals, it was the motivations of researchers which seemed most striking.

*Nothing right about it, no respect for the animals, it was just a mound of mice, chucking them, but the way they were speaking to each other, 'oh I felt the back break...'*

**Cardiff, E2**

*They have no compassion. Was just barbarism. That was brutal.*

**London, E2**

The implications for the sector are that any **culture of complacency** should be addressed. To the public, demonstrating the motivations of the researchers and creating an open culture within which they work is seen as just as important to address as giving the public information, facts and figures about the sector.

When the public suspect that any researchers are disrespectful, insensitive, or dehumanised then they feel very distant from the research community. Participants felt that researchers should respect the privilege of being allowed to use animal's lives for other purposes and that this should inform their behaviour at all times.

They wanted proof of an internal awareness about the gravity of culling animals and potentially many more trackable ways of keeping note of what researchers do with the animals in their care.

*Each organisation on a monthly, six monthly, quarterly basis should submit a report to the Home Office – saying what animals are being used, how many had to be killed, methods, and the aim – so there should be somebody at the Home Office checking on this.*

**London, E2**

*Animals should have a passport so we can see [what happens to them] all the way through.*

**Cardiff, E2**

Participants asked to know about any rewards for progressive practice, as well as punishment for bad practice.

*From the perspective of the researchers, is there a way we can encourage them to value the welfare of the animals more? They don't want to treat them that badly but I think everyone needs to somehow give them a carrot, incentivise it for them to make it worth their while.*

**London, E1**

### **2.3.2 Few differences between locations**

Overall, results were homogenous. Analysis sought to identify where opinion diverged between different sub-groups i.e. socio-demographics but it became evident that in almost all areas of discussion there was broad consensus or strength of feeling of particular issues.

By the end of both events, the principles underlying participants' responses were clear and consistent across the different events and location, so we are confident they represent real principles present in the population. That said, there were some small differences:

- Those in higher socio-demographic groups with higher levels of education tended to want more detailed and nuanced information.
- Younger participants tended to start the sessions saying they felt very distant from the sector, but soon became engaged.
- Middle aged participants tended to start the sessions saying that they were very concerned and disapproved of animal research, but through the days tended to modify this view.
- Younger tended to start without any knowledge – older tended to start by saying they were against it. Then everyone changed their views - sometimes more than once - as they learned more.

In the next chapters we discuss which key pieces of information the public feel the public need to know in order to evaluate the openness and transparency of the sector; and their suggestions for openness both in external scrutiny and communications.

### 3. Key information on animal research

#### Summary

This chapter describes the key pieces of information the public want to know from the animal research sector.

Participants wanted information on the **specifics** of animal research in order to feel qualified to join any debate about features of the sector.

In some cases this is specific **information** about what happens; but also there is a requirement for detailed explanations of how researchers **weigh up** different considerations when deciding on the kind of research to do.

Key information includes:

- Specifics on **animal use**; by organisation per year; actual numbers and percentages of different animal types used; and severity of procedures conducted. Information in arrears, explaining how many animals had actually been used against how many planned to be used.
- Additional information about **genetically altered animals**, why are they used and why the rise in numbers? Reassurance about public health concerns such as genetically altered animals entering the food chain.
- The **outcomes** for the animals (end-points/use in other procedures, etc); to demonstrate that the life of each animal has been tracked and animal lives are respected.
- What are the **3Rs**? More evidence of how these are considered in research design. Plus, more information in the public domain about alternatives to animal use.
- Much more information on animal care and welfare before, during and after procedures. Information about the seniority of **welfare officer** and how able he/she is, in practice, to stand up for the welfare of animals
- Nature and levels of suffering, more detailed than mild/moderate/severe, with lots of examples including **images** of typical procedures in the public domain.
- How animals are killed (and are there alternatives) by institution
- **Publication** of findings: at minimum, reports on finished projects from animal welfare point of view.

#### 3.1 Information and education

This section summarises the key areas which the public feel constitute the sector being open and transparent. In many cases, the public asked questions about animal use directly in Event 1, then later discussed and refined what they thought should be in the public domain in Event 2. By the end of both events, the principles underlying participants' responses were clear and consistent across the different events and location, so we are confident they represent real principles present in the population.

Most people in the events acknowledged that they themselves might not go and look at this information, but said that if the sector wanted to call itself open, this level of detail should be in the public domain and searchable by those who had an interest.

Some requirements are for specific pieces of **information**, simply so that participants would feel more informed and able to join any discussion about animal research. In order to give an informed opinion about animal research, participants also wanted a broader kind of **education**; an understanding of the range of ways researchers and funders might weigh up animal welfare against different considerations when deciding to conduct animal research.

Much of the requests for information were requests for detail about animal welfare before, during and after procedures; because the public believe that the crucial debate in animal research is to weigh up the **suffering vs. benefits** of animal research. Therefore, they wanted to know a lot more about the harms, as well as about the scientific aims and results of research.

*The more information we get, the better. It's been a huge learning curve today.*  
**Cardiff, E1**

### 3.2 More specifics on animal use

In all workshops, participants wanted to know more specifics on the actual facts and figures of animal use. They would like to know which organisations breed and use animals, how many are bred and used, and the level of severity of procedures undergone by each animal.

Participants felt actual numbers made it clearer how many animals had been used.

Some participants assumed that this level of information, sorted by institution, was already available online. Between the events, they completed homework researching the sector online, and in reconvening for the second event reported that they had not been able to find this information. Some had looked at the Home Office website in their homework task, but had not found it easy to use.

Ideally they would like this information published for each institution, per year, using both actual numbers and statistics, with a breakdown of animal species used. Ideally this would be in one central place but each institution would be responsible for providing the information.

*If you pick an organisation you should be able to check what animals, what project title.*

**London, E2**

*I want to know how many animals are bred and killed, publications of animal procedures and their severity. The number used and harm done to them.*

**Cardiff, E2**

Some also argued that information should be broken down by research teams or individual researchers. It was likely that some participants did not realise that this

may still make it possible to identify individuals working in narrow fields. Many suggested ideas to protect privacy as the aim would not be to attach individual identities to the research; they did want researchers' privacy to be protected.

*We don't need to know it's Dr Jones at this address, it should be a serial number or something.*

**Manchester, E1**

The public also wanted information to be presented in arrears – not simply licence information about types or broad numbers of animals permitted under the licence, but in practice how many animals *had been* used during the course of a project; including any accidentally killed during the experiments. It is likely that the change in regulations, requiring this information be presented, will be welcomed.

Participants acknowledged that this might involve the sector in more time and expense. However, they felt that giving this level of detail would send a clear signal to the public that the sector is respectful of all animals used. The principle behind this is that the public want to know that even once licences have been granted, researchers do not treat animals as an infinite, disposable resource. Participants feared that researchers would be blasé about life and death and that animals might suffer more because of this.

*They're doing it, and to do it on a daily basis...it's then when they're dehumanised they start doing bad things.*

**London, E2**

There was considerable interest in the rise in use of genetically altered animals especially mice, as described in Chapter 2. There is a need to hear from the sector what these are and the purpose of their use. In particular, participants wanted to know what kinds of procedures these animals undergo – is it 'only' breeding or are the animals subject to other procedures? And in this case, what happens to the animals afterwards, and why are such large numbers required by the sector?

*I'm sure you don't need three million mice a year...you can't justify three million mice.*

**Manchester, E1**

### **3.3 The principles of the 3Rs and how this impacts research design**

No participant said that he or she had heard of the 3Rs principles (Replace, Refine, Reduce) in advance of the workshops. However, when they described what they wanted to know, the underlying principle was often that they needed reassurance that research design had taken the three considerations into account.

They wanted institutions to publish evidence of due diligence, including their efforts to find out whether similar projects had not been undertaken before; for the avoidance of *replication*.

*There might be waste and unnecessarily replication.*

**Cardiff, E1**

Participants wanted to know: why particular species were well suited to the procedure; why they would give better results than other species or non-animal alternatives; and what the costs and benefits to the institution and to science would be of doing the same investigation *without* using animals. They wanted evidence that the institution had conducted this analysis. This was information on the *replacement* of animals.

*I want to know that they have tested other methods that didn't work so they had to do the animals method and they tried to provide the best possible conditions for the animals.*

**London, E1**

In terms of *reduction* of animal numbers, participants wanted to know how researchers had come to the decision to do the experiment in that way, using that number of animals.

Participants wanted the sector to make public much more information about the alternatives to using animals; and to give detailed examples. Even when searching in their homework tasks, only a minority found information or press releases about new developments in computer modelling, or any information about any other alternatives or comparisons between methods.

Most participants understood (after absorbing the stimulus information) that some benefits of research are not clear-cut, that there is dispute over the value of benefits, and that some benefits of a particular project might not be realised for a long time, if ever. However, they still wanted the researchers to make public their reasoning on using animals and their expectation of the direct benefits from that project. Some wanted these discussions to be scrutinised by others, for example animal welfare campaigners, to check whether the benefits were really likely or were simply a result of researchers 'talking up' their projects.

*I appreciate they might not be able to say that there will be a set outcome, but there must be some justification... because some of the anti ones [animal protection organisations] infer that the research is useless and nothing of any value has come out of it after years.*

**London, E2**

Again, most knew that to do this for all procedures and projects would involve the creation of a lot of new information. However, in principle, these would be elements of openness which would enable interested parties to weigh up, genuinely, the sector's progress towards meeting the goals of the 3Rs. Some felt that they could not weigh up animal suffering against benefits (and hence could not give their support or withhold their support for the research) without these crucial pieces of information about potential alternatives.

Some also suggested that if the animal research sector is communicating more widely about the 3Rs, then this might embed the practice more thoroughly in the everyday life of researchers and research funders.

### 3.4 The importance of a culture of welfare

There was a strong need to hear how animal welfare is considered. At first, early in the sessions, some assumed that animal welfare would not be considered at all by animal researchers either during the research or in looking after them before and after each procedure.

*I don't think they're bothered are they, how they transport them, I don't think it matters to them if they get battered about in transportation.*

**Manchester, E1**

*Give them a portion of a normal animal life – let them play, don't put them in a cage.*

**London, E2**

Information about the role of the animal welfare officer<sup>15</sup> in the lab was well received but participants wanted to know more about the actual capacity of this officer to 'stand against' senior research teams and put the case for animal welfare against other considerations.

*[Funders and senior researchers would say] We've got this awful affliction of people that kills thousands of Britons – cure it for us, we'll look the other way about how you treat the animals.*

**London, E2**

A key point in openness was to demonstrate that the welfare officer was senior enough to make the case for the animals' interests even if this meant halting procedures or reporting projects to the Home Office. Participants were concerned that junior members of staff might feel they could not report bad practice, so wanted to ensure that there were internal routes to deal with any concerns, without juniors needing to resort to whistle blowing.

There was also concern that the sector should reward good practice in welfare as well as punish bad practice. Some participants asked for specific recognition of excellence in animal welfare as well as just monitoring that all institutions reach an acceptable standard.

*Like the food hygiene standards you have one to five, a rating scheme to show the credibility of the people doing the research.*

**Cardiff, E2**

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<sup>15</sup> Every establishment licensed to undertake animal research must have a Named Animal Care and Welfare Officer (NACWO) who is responsible for the day to day care and welfare of all the animals kept at that establishment.

### 3.5 Images and descriptions of suffering

Facilitators showed participants the categorisation of three levels of suffering (mild moderate and severe). For many, the descriptions we showed were not seen as detailed enough to give a good idea of what the animals actually underwent. Participants wanted access to more examples and types of experiment to be able to get a clear idea of the range of procedures allowed and how they were assessed.

*We all know there are diseases that are crueller than Parkinson's. My hunch is that each one of these examples (see levels of suffering handout in appendix) could be further categorised as examples, say between one and ten within 'severe'.*

**London, E1**

Participants wanted more explanation of how different sorts of physical and psychological suffering were considered for different animals and at what points during the process animals are assessed to see whether the projected level of suffering is actually taking place, or whether the suffering is worse.

*What types of parameters do they use for suffering?*

**Manchester, E1**

*If you're halfway through the experiment, and think it will cause 5 points of pain, and find at some point it will cause more. Who decides then whether it continues?*

**London, E1**

In reading descriptions of suffering, it became clear that public understanding of scientific terminology is very low. Even some fairly simple constructions were hard to understand, and descriptions misinterpreted, because participants had very little knowledge about what happens in a laboratory, even the basics such as how animals are housed, picked up, or held.

*This says the procedure involves 'capturing and restraining the rabbit'. What do they mean capturing? Do they mean go out in a field and catch a rabbit? I thought they bred them!*

**London, E1**

There was a call for **images and films** of what different typical procedures are like. In all three locations participants wanted to know what 'best practice' looked like within the mild, moderate and severe parameters. They were aware that a procedure might look distressing, but still be conducted according to good research practice.

*I'm sure there are things that happen, that are done for good reasons but look awful.*

**Cardiff, E2**

This was particularly key after participants watched the BUAV film. This included rabbits undergoing a procedure with a long duration, and monkeys undergoing a procedure categorised as moderate but which many participants felt was dramatic and might better be categorised as severe. Participants felt they had little context for

these distressing images and would have liked to know how far these were the norm, or how far these represented bad practice. Some said that showing more images would create a more informed view of what procedures actually involve.

*They should show both sides, not only the 5% [that the BUAV film shows] but also the ones where it didn't go wrong and they were treated better. Is that film showing only 5% or is that across the board? That's what I want to see!*

**Manchester, E2**

In all three locations participants discussed the potential consequences for the sector of releasing more images of procedures. It was mentioned everywhere that if images of well-conducted, typical procedures are put online, or even as detailed descriptions, there would certainly be a rush to co-opt the most distressing content by the media, who deal in shock and would be keen to criticise the sector.

*The media tend to embellish things, they print things really negatively, they don't give you a balanced view.*

**Manchester, E1**

There was also a feeling that animal protection organisations would seek out the most severe procedures and find elements which were most distressing in order to publicise this to the public, and that the sector might need to then address or rebuff these claims. Most participants, however, saw this as a natural consequence of openness; and felt that the public interest might be served by this. Some pointed out that the animals are, indeed, suffering, and the sector should be prepared to show the public what this looks like. They felt that the sector could not really call itself open without allowing a demonstration of the range of procedures in the public domain.

The benefit would be that the public would understand what best practice looks like and then be able to weigh up the value of doing the research at all; and consider infringements in context.

### 3.6 How animals are killed

Participants wanted information about how and why animals are killed after research. For many, this was the most important piece of information they requested because they saw death as the most serious harm which could be caused to an animal.

Key questions included: how many procedures must an animal undergo? When is euthanasia required? Are there alternatives to euthanasia?

*Who says when the animals have had enough... And does the test kill them, or are they killed afterwards?*

**Manchester, E1**

Participants were informed that there was an ethical consideration in the licence granting about the number of procedures done on an animal. Participants wanted to hear that this is taken into account when considering the number of animals to use, and how many procedures any one animal should undergo.

A sense of natural justice meant that for many, killing animals at all after experiments (except where the procedure required a post mortem assessment of the animal) seemed very unfair. A minority wanted the sector to provide 'retirement' for animals, even though others argued that this would be unrealistic.

*Breeding them just to kill them off – that's cruelty...you want them to live happily ever after.*

**Cardiff, E1**

In terms of openness and transparency, participants felt the public should know more about how many animals are killed and certainly how the killing takes place. Participants wanted this information at an institution level.

### 3.7 Publication of findings

Participants generally felt that all academic and publicly-funded research should move towards sharing findings as much as possible, in the interests of refinement of animal use and ensuring that experiments are not replicated. However, they did acknowledge that commercial and research interests make this difficult.

*They're all fighting for whatever cure, they're not going to share their state secrets to another company.*

**Manchester, E2**

Nevertheless they were keen for the sector (both private and publicly-funded) to demonstrate concrete efforts to publish and share findings. Participants told us they did not know of any such efforts happening at the moment. There was some misconception that scientists are required to publish all their findings. Even those who knew that publication is not always required wanted learning shared more within the sector.

*So that scientists who aren't publishing findings, then others come along and apply to do the same thing.*

**Cardiff, E1**

The history of debate over the best way to ensure publication of academic research goes far beyond the world of animal research and outside the confines of this dialogue, but the principle behind this for dialogue participants was that they wanted the sector to value the 3Rs more than they value commercial principles. They wanted the sector to strive towards ways of sharing findings across both public and private sectors; however, they agreed they did not have the answer for how this should be done.

Some comments on publication were based on misconceptions about the production of scientific data. Many participants made comments such as "show us the failures as well as the successes" - imagining "successes" were drug trial experiments which had led to concrete benefits such as "the invention of a drug", while experiments which had uncovered that the drug being "tested" was not safe for use in animals or humans were classed as "failures".

*I want to know how many tests were done by a particular organisation and how many of them were successful and drugs came out, how many failed and how many were not going to make the medication better so had to waste money, time and the poor animal who lost its life.*

***London, E2***

It may, then, be hard to communicate the value of a well-designed experiment which achieves its objectives, but nevertheless does not lead to immediate progression of a new product or cure. However, participants still wanted the results of experiments to be reported from the animal welfare perspective, and to understand the scientific direction behind the experiment.

## 4. Constructive suggestions for openness: the need for external scrutiny

A **prerequisite** for the animal research sector calling itself open and transparent is that it should subject itself to **external scrutiny** by those who have an interest in the **animals' welfare**, rather than by those who have a vested financial or scientific interest in the research being carried out. Government, industry and the animal welfare sector all have a role to play.

**Home Office:** Participants assumed that government regulation is already in place; though some overestimate the level of scrutiny from the Home Office and the severity of punishments.

- The number of Home Office inspectors seems few and participants are concerned that with few inspectors and self-reporting, infringements will not be picked up. It is important to ensure the sector and regulators are not 'cosy'.
- Request from some on detailed reasoning for notices of infringement.
- Participants would also like to see very severe punishments where malpractice is found such as fines or custodial sentences.

Sector subjecting itself to voluntary scrutiny:

- Potential for the sector to pay for external scrutiny, e.g. from animal welfare organisations.
- Licences to be subject to FOI requests and also placed online for a period for comment before being granted. They should be in layman's language, have details on the level of animal suffering and animal welfare arrangements, and the Home Office should take comments into account before granting licences.
- Animal Care and Welfare officers should be protected if they report suspected wrongdoing i.e. whistleblowing and given seniority within the sector.
- The idea of CCTV in labs would be welcomed; though participants recognised it is challenging to film everything, and maybe too invasive of researcher privacy, there is a good opportunity to use some film to increase number of spot checks on the sector.
- Numbers and severity of procedures published and analysed by institution as well as information with regard to level of suffering and welfare arrangements.
- Organisations, especially in the private sector, should publish details of the research they do in non-EU countries.
- League tables of institutions that conduct animal research are not seen as essential but could be used by the Home Office rather than for the public.

This kind of scrutiny must be in place in order for the public to trust and appreciate other efforts that the sector might make to be open, e.g. through its own communications (described in Chapter 5).

## 4.1 Principles of openness and transparency

Participants came up with principles which they felt the sector should follow when addressing openness and transparency.

Broadly, everything mentioned fell into one of two categories:

- Ideas which prove to the public that the sector is subjecting itself to **external scrutiny** (described here in Chapter 4)
- Ideas which would help the sector create a **wider understanding of animal research within society** (described in the next chapter, Chapter 5)

To further this discussion and get more detail on practical illustrations of the principles used, we created a list of ideas, identified by stakeholders, the Oversight Group, and ideas from the public domain, to use as test cases to stimulate discussion of what openness and transparency could look like in practice. These are shown in the appendix. Many of these found favour with participants; the ideas which participants supported the most are the ones which provide the best concrete illustrations of the principles they want to see adopted.

The two principles were expressed across locations. Within the ideas that were supported, there were very few differences between sub-groups or the wider location groups and we have indicated where there were differences and new ideas expressed in different groups. The underlying principles, however, were expressed unusually coherently within the dialogue as a whole.

## 4.2 External scrutiny

The more they knew about the sector, the more participants wanted to be convinced that external scrutiny was comprehensive and would have a bearing on the sector's behaviour. Many agreed that even with good intentions from practitioners, any system needs external checks and balances in order to maintain high standards.

*Humans are like babies, if you're not being checked you do something wrong, we're not perfect.*

**London, E2**

External scrutiny was felt to be important because participants knew they themselves did not have the expertise to assess whether procedures are being followed with relation to animal welfare or good scientific practice.

They also mentioned that they lacked the incentive to look at detailed evidence or to maintain an interest in good practice.

Without evidence of this external scrutiny, many participants felt that any other efforts made by the sector to be open would not be credible or convincing.

### 4.3 The role of Home Office regulation

These views were given in a context of public generally assuming the Home Office regulatory framework was strict and well applied. Participants believed that the rules governing licensing were well designed and there were no loopholes; though it is worth saying that this was not based on much concrete knowledge.

*There's a really good book about science by Ben Goldacre, that says that when, say, Boots say stuff about shampoo, it's total crap. But this [animal research] is something different, it's scientific, there's ethical guidelines, not anybody can just do it.*

**Manchester, E1**

This fits with findings from polling carried out in 2012 by Ipsos MORI where over half (53%) of people believe that Britain probably has tough rules governing animal research. However, that study showed that the number of people feeling that laws are well enforced has fallen (42%), and fewer feel they “can trust inspectors to bring to light misconduct” compared with 2010 / 2011.

While participants in this study did not say that they personally trusted the inspectorate less than they might have done in the past, this study does reveal that they made some assumptions about how regulation works. When these assumptions are explored, and sometimes contradicted by the experts at Event 1, participants' confidence in the regulatory process reduced. So, there is learning for the sector and for regulators.

First, participants assumed that at the moment, licences are scrutinised for welfare considerations and ethics committees judge all aspects of the licence, having adequate representation from animal welfare organisations and lay members of the public.

*I like to think the ethics committee and the relevant people would make sure the least amount of suffering is inflicted.*

**Manchester, E1**

Participants were disappointed if they thought that this was not the case, and said they would like to see committees including this range of voices.

*I looked at a committee, there was PETA on the committee but no lay person.*

**Cardiff, E2**

Second, while we gave no material to inform a discussion of how the Home Office grants licences in detail, there was a tacit assumption that many licence applications would be turned down on strict animal welfare grounds, or that projects would be redesigned to limit suffering. Some were concerned that the licensing process, though it requires specification of numbers and types of animals used, does not give enough certainty about the aims and background of researchers. Participants were

keen that licensing should build in the surety of a culture of respect for the animals. There was a particular focus on this in some of the London discussions:

*How can the Home Office judge someone's morals?...they can't, they can only look at your criminal record. But it's relevant because you're dealing with living things.*  
**London, E2**

*The person I interviewed [for my homework task] said when licenses are applied for, are the individuals assessed? She didn't think you could do that. Their psychological profile might show that they're sadists.*

**London, E2**

Third, participants had clear ideas about what inspection should involve. They wanted spot checks on labs, with no prior warning given, by a large and independent inspectorate. Participants in all three locations were surprised and disappointed to learn that the number of inspectors is in the 20s rather than in the hundreds as they had assumed.

*If there's 3.7 million procedures, that isn't enough inspectors.*

**Cardiff, E1**

The idea of self-reporting and any implications for good or bad practice was difficult for some participants to grasp. Before seeing the BUAV undercover footage, the groups did not, largely, comment on self-reporting, as they were not focusing on bad practice. Even so, a minority suggested that a better option would be for the sector to commission its own inspectorate to support the Government, rather than rely on self-reporting which gives no guarantee that malpractice will be found.

*I would say they should pay inspectors themselves, you've got to be seen to be clean*  
**Cardiff, E2**

*There's plenty of people out there with no conscience. If people can self-report they don't care about the suffering they cause and they are not accountable.*

**London, E2**

After seeing infringements of the rules in the BUAV film, many participants felt strongly that the Government should provide a larger inspectorate, rely less on self-reporting and run spot checks and unannounced visits, as well as implement other solutions such as CCTV in labs.

Participants were keen that any inspectors should maintain independence and distance from the sector, especially if self-reporting was the norm.

*I used to work at [a regulatory body] where we always worried you shouldn't become too cosy with the people you are inspecting. Official inspectors shouldn't be too cosy.*  
**Cardiff, E2**

Fourth, participants assumed that the Home Office regularly gives very severe punishments, such as projects and institutions being shut down.

*We don't need to know if things are wrong, so long as they shut it down.*

**Cardiff, E1**

Because of this, many participants wanted to see the Home Office publishing more about the way it deals with infringements and publicising transgressions and punishments. The Home Office is felt to bear the responsibility for making sure wrongdoers are punished and there is a feeling punishments should be very strict.

Government was trusted to regulate more than the sector itself was (especially the private sector elements). However, if government regulation is not trusted, or regulators do not make it clear how regulation works, the rest of the sector's efforts to be open may be undermined. Therefore, the Home Office and the sector have a role to play in ensuring public confidence in the regulatory process.

Participants had no awareness, in advance of the dialogue, of the legal situation around the animal research sector being required to release information into the public domain. We gave a limited amount of information about **Freedom of Information** and **Section 24** of the Animal Procedures Act 1984, saying simply that public institutions carrying out animal research can be subject to freedom of information requests but there are sometimes situations in which researchers can use a different piece of legislation to argue that they do not have to provide this information. Because the dialogue did not focus on the legal requirements around openness, (but instead focused on what else the sector could do voluntarily to be more open) there was no extended discussion around the implications of the law.

There was, therefore, little discussion of the public interest in making FOI requests of the sector. There was some indication that participants felt it reasonable that researchers should be able to protect their own privacy; and that there should be some ability for the public to find out details of infringements and bad practice. However, the groups did not discuss what role an exemption from FOI, or a commitment to FOI, could play in regulating the sector.

## 4.4 The role of further voluntary regulation

### 4.4.1 Independent 'inspectors'

Participants wanted the animal research sector to subject itself to **external scrutiny** by those who have an interest in the animals' welfare rather than by those who have a vested financial or scientific interest. This, they felt, would enable other interested parties to see what the sector was doing.

*Journalists would be able to jump on things a lot more easily if the info was more available.*

**London, E1**

*More inspectors and spot-checks, paid for by the sector. The inspector should be the RSPCA or someone who's there for the animal's welfare.*

**London, E2**

*More Home Office inspectors that could increase the number of random spot checks, and independent monitors with a minimum level of qualifications, competently and adequately trained.*

**Manchester, E2 (summary of the main things they wanted)**

If the sector 'puts its money where its mouth is' and funds an enhanced inspectorate, that was felt to be a very good signal of good faith in terms of a genuine commitment to openness.

*Inspector organisations should be not accountable to the animal research organisations, but funded by them. Like judges are paid by government but not beholden to them.*

**Manchester, E2**

The RSPCA was particularly trusted and participants said they wanted collaboration between the sector itself, other animal welfare interests, and the official Government regulators in order to scrutinise the industry

*So between the 3 of them they could be more effective. Like the more doctors and social workers and teachers link up, the safer the children. So could the three link up?*

**London, E1**

*[Our other key principle] is bringing in independent expertise...and private sector and public researchers should be treated the same way.*

**Cardiff, E1**

Of the suggestions we explored, some were strongly supported and participants felt they would help ensure openness. There were also suggestions generated by participants themselves. The following sections summarise the ideas which they ultimately felt were most important; both from our suggestions, and from the principles they generated.

#### **4.4.2 Licences published online or disclosed under FOI**

***The licences authorising animal research should be disclosed under a Freedom of Information request of the Home Office (but with personal details, the name of the establishment and genuinely confidential information withheld). At present, researchers can prevent the Government releasing any information about animal research they give to it.<sup>16</sup>***

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<sup>16</sup> It is important to note that this is not the view of UAR – they say that Government hold researcher's information confidentiality and are not at liberty to release it – but was included in the dialogue stimulus to aid discussion of the benefits and drawbacks of more openness and transparency.

***Licence applications should be available for a short time before the Home Office decides whether to grant a licence. Some EU legislation provides a window for comment before animal experiments take place.***

In Manchester there was near-unanimous support for the two ideas presented here, that licences should be disclosed, and also that they should be online before being granted. In other locations this was broadly but not unanimously supported.

Those who were less supportive usually did not really understand how this might improve standards in the sector or promote openness. Some simply felt that the general public did not need to see them and would not bother.

*Even if they do put the info out there, people won't bother.*

**Cardiff, E2**

However, those who supported this concept liked the idea that all types of group could take a look, including animal welfare and anti-vivisection groups.

Participants recommended that anything in the public domain like this needed to be written in lay language, while being detailed enough to give a good idea of what is actually proposed and why.

*Not just a summary, more detailed information.*

**London, E2**

*Any information should be written in layman's terms. It comes over people's head. Make it more public but in more practical terms.*

**Cardiff, E1**

The level of lay language might need to be carefully assessed; as described in Section 3.5 above, some participants found it hard to understand even the limited scientific description of procedures, with very little background knowledge as to how they worked.

In all locations, participants wanted personal information about the research to be redacted in order to protect the identities of researchers.

There was a more subtle reason for support for the second idea, licences being put in the public domain before the decision had been taken to grant them. Some participants wanted to make the objectives and purposes of the research clear upfront, so that the public could get more involved in determining priorities. In Event 1, our stimulus materials explained that there are a range of views on the value of some animal procedures. In some cases, researchers might want to develop products or chemicals which require research involving animals, while other groups might argue that the products are not intrinsically valuable. Participants felt that putting detailed licence applications in the public domain would make sure that the

purpose of the research was clear before the study took place. Then, interest groups could make their point about whether the project as a whole would be valuable.

*[Some may think that finding a cure for baldness is not valuable, but] someone may care a lot about being bald, so we need something from the public to determine priorities.*

**London, E2**

Participants also pointed out that for this idea to work, the Home Office would need to undertake to look at, and take into account, the comments made on the licences, otherwise there would be no point in the process.

#### **4.4.3 CCTV in labs**

***CCTV in every lab which uses live animals, streamed in the public domain***

There was much support for this idea and especially strong views expressed by a minority in London. Reasons behind support included:

- Public can feel they are really seeing what is going on, in real time
- Spot checks – at any time researchers can be scrutinised by inspectors for compliance and good practice
- Improve performance – because researchers would know they could be scrutinised, they would adhere to the highest standards.

However most also acknowledged that while they supported the principle behind CCTV, there might be some practical snags. Most (except the London minority) recognised that this would generate far too much footage which, for the most part, would never be watched. Individuals' identities could also not be protected and indiscriminate videoing might infringe the rights of researchers to have their privacy protected at work (private conversations would be overheard, for example). In Cardiff participants suggested that the public do not need to see this footage, but they recommend film footage should be made available for inspectors (either internal welfare officers or external Home Office or other registered animal welfare inspectors). This was felt to provide the benefits of filming without potentially exposing individual researchers. In particular, it might reduce the pressure on Government inspectors by allowing the Home Office to request footage for any day, time, and procedure, without having to spend time and resources visiting the lab.

#### **4.4.4 Level and severity of procedures, plus animal welfare information, published by each institution**

***Every researcher working with live animals must publish the total number of animals, total number of procedures, level and nature of suffering caused, in a box at the top of every publication of results.***

***All establishments using animals must publish how they house and care for animals, and the number and severity of the procedures they conduct every year.***

In line with other suggestions that participants made, discussed in Chapter 3, there was strong support for each institution publishing welfare and suffering information together with information about animal species and numbers so that animal welfare and ethical review bodies and the general public could see what was being done within the sector. Participants particularly supported the idea that the suffering of animals should be linked to the publication of results. Some suggested that this should be published by licence rather than by publication of results, and that each institution should publicise this as well as the Home Office. A further refinement was that more detailed welfare standards and suffering guidelines should also be published.

#### **4.4.5 Make sure that welfare officers internally have enough seniority**

*The ones at the top are the ruthless ones, they might be wanting to push the limits.*  
**Cardiff, E2**

*If you're thinking you need a breakthrough to make billions, and maybe could that mouse suffer a bit more?*

**Manchester, E2**

In all locations participants noted in their final summaries that welfare officers should have enough seniority to stand up for the welfare of animals against other considerations. There would be various ways an institution could signal the enhanced role of the welfare officer to the public. This could include the officer having a job title which clearly showed they were at the highest level of the organisation; having a role in all licence applications; being able to request CCTV footage of any procedure; and having a clear line of contact with the Home Office inspectorate and a good relationship with external animal welfare organisations.

#### **4.4.6 Report the global use of animals**

***Organisations to report on what animal research they are doing or commissioning in non-EU regulated countries***

While this was not discussed in great detail, for some participants this was an important component of openness, especially for private sector organisations perceived to have a global footprint. Reporting on animal research elsewhere in the world – and by extension, then seeking to reduce the research done in non EU countries – was seen as a key part of openness. Though it was not seen as the single most important first step in openness, nobody disagreed that this would be a good move forward for the sector.

*I'm amazed they can do this. It's like extraordinary rendition – farming out your torture to other countries.*

**London, E2**

#### **4.4.7 Ideas which were less supported: League tables and opening meetings up to the public**

Some ideas were acknowledged as helping the sector illustrate its commitment to external scrutiny – yet were seen as less strong ideas in themselves.

##### ***League table of infringements (breaches of the regulations) published for all establishments doing animal research***

There were mixed views on this idea, mostly because participants could not see how they could be used. Other analogies, such as university league tables, made sense because they enable consumer decisions, but members of the public could not see what the benefits would be to an organisation being at the top of the animal welfare table, or what would happen to those at the bottom. Participants therefore suggested amendments, such as the Home Office or funders rewarding those with fewest infringements, or gradually revealing more information into the public domain about those with most infringements.

*They should have three strikes and you're out, then everyone knows who you are and what you have done.*

**Cardiff, E2**

Some suggested benefits to a league table. If each institution was more open about the infringements they have had, then those with fewest judgements against them might be able to attract new researchers, funding, and drive up standards even further. Others thought that a league table would be a good way of publicising the Home Office's punishments for infringements. If these were more in the public eye, this would encourage the Home Office to be stricter in its sanctions.

However the overall decision was that a league table would be unfair, for example the statistics would need to be carefully weighted so that smaller and larger institutions could be easily compared. Similarly, different types of organisations conducting animal research might be more or less likely to have infringements, so it would be hard to compare like with like.

##### ***Government and advisory bodies (e.g. Animals in Science Committee) should hold meetings in public***

While there was support for showing video of meetings live online, there was concern at every location that holding meetings in public might provide opportunities for direct action from anti-animal research groups. Weighing this up, participants did not see this as crucial to openness.

## 5. Constructive suggestions for openness: communication

Participants noted that the sector should aim to **create a wider understanding** of animal research within society.

They felt that the following ideas would help create a public better fitted to have an informed discussion about animal research:

- Explaining the **weaknesses and limitations** of animal research.
- Participants wanted wider education about the 3Rs and a commitment that the sector has signed up to these rather than simply having aspirations to meet the requirements.
- Explaining the **benefits** of animal research; both those realised already and those which are less certain or may take time to be realised.
- Helping raise **awareness** of the use of animals, and respecting the sacrifice of animal life, for instance adding animal research note to **medicines** (small logo, for example) to demonstrate the value of animal research in the development process.
- **Public access to laboratories** but only as visitors, and as an addition to other approaches to openness, this was not felt to be enough on its own and is an educational tool rather than an aspect of scrutiny.
- There was no demand for **signage**; this was felt to be an infringement of privacy.

### 5.1 Creating public understanding of animal research

Participants supported ideas which simply aimed to educate the public about animal research; because more knowledge about the sector and what goes on would create a more informed public who could engage with ethical or other decisions about harms versus benefits of animal research.

The following ideas were the most supported; again, a mixture of those prompted and those generated by participants themselves.

#### 5.1.1 Explaining the weaknesses and limitations of animal research as well as its benefits

*The sector being more open and candid about the weaknesses and deficiencies and limitations of animal research, and the benefits of animal research.*

Participants wanted the sector to explain more about the range of views which exist on animal research. They felt that a frank discussion of weaknesses and limitations as well as benefits would illustrate the sector's commitment to the 3Rs, and signal an eventual aim to remove the need for animal research altogether. Without this

discussion, some participants felt that the sector just has aspirations to consider the 3Rs rather than being firmly committed to their implementation. Key elements would include:

- explaining how bad research design or small mistakes can result in the wastage of animal lives;
- explaining what legislative requirements require animal research, why they are in place, and what alternatives there might be; and
- opening up a discussion of whether the eventual aims of the research itself justify the use of animal lives.

Some participants felt that it would create a greater confidence in openness if animal research practitioners were able to put both the benefits and drawbacks of animal research on their websites. A few mentioned that they had a sense that anti-animal research campaigners would likely stress the negatives, while practitioners stress the positives, making it hard for the public to judge the reality.

*When we go to the websites of industrialists doing animal research they only focus on the positives, and those against you only see negative things. Even themselves they should do both – we should see both sides.*

**London, E2**

Some participants pointed out that through a discussion of weaknesses, the sector might be able to better explain some of the more nebulous benefits of basic bioscience research.

*[If you're talking about what you haven't discovered as well as what you have,] this raises the point about research can have an objective and by accident during the research some other discovery can be made. Making it clear that there is an agenda but it doesn't always go that way.*

**London, E2**

There was also a call from participants to hear more about the benefits resulting from animal research. At the moment, in the absence of a more nuanced discussion, the little information that participants knew about the sector seemed to come from media reports about the extremes of animal research – specifically research that had been carried out irresponsibly and had resulted in undue suffering to the animals.

*Because some of the protestors, news on the telly, animal protestors are attacking somebody – we never hear a program that puts out the benefits, the real benefits and statistics, of what animal research has produced over the years. I don't think there's enough information about the benefits.*

**Manchester, E1**

## **5.1.2 Images available for those who want them**

**Images to be available for those who want them - detailing every stage of research process**

One of the strongest calls from the research was the idea that more specific images of procedures should be made available. Participants supported the idea when we tested it and came up with the idea themselves too. This idea turned up in the summary presentations of most groups at the end of Event 2 and has been further discussed in section 3.5.

Some participants wanted instructive video of most procedures, while others asked for still images, particularly relating to the care and handling of the animal, its housing, the actual procedure, the recovery process, and the eventual long term effect on the animal.

There was some awareness that using imagery is a double-edged sword. While images show clearly what is happening, participants were very aware they do not come with context, and can be stripped of context and used for different communication purposes. Similarly there was an awareness that when graphic or shocking images are put into the public domain they are open to be used for purposes not intended.

*Imagine if you saw your kids laughing at [films of] animal medical research, of something getting killed.*

**Manchester, E2**

However, participants agreed that this was an inevitable risk of openness, but that openness comes with risks and the sector needs to embrace these.

A few mentioned that only those opposed to animal research are currently distributing images of procedures and the sector does not currently present imagery.

*[PETA] has a YouTube channel, twitter, reddit, quite convincing, they're really out there.*

**Manchester, E2**

### **5.1.3 Raising awareness of the part played by animals in medicine**

**All medicines, whether prescription medicines or those available over the counter, which have been tested on animals should be clearly labelled as such - along the lines of Professor Robert Winston's current proposals in the House of Lords Bill**

Participants showed real interest in this idea. This was because the concept of showing the role of animal experiments in medical research seemed very concrete and relevant to people's everyday lives (more so than some of the more abstract sections of the dialogue). There is learning here; anything that can link the issues and debates of animal research to daily life is likely to create interest and engagement.

In all groups, individuals supported the idea that the development of drugs should be linked to the suffering of animals, as a way of respecting the sacrifice of animal life. Any humans taking the drugs would be made aware of the role of animals in drug

development, and this might help educate the public about the size, scope and function of the animal research sector.

Participants asserted that any education is a good thing. But given their own low levels of awareness about the sector, this idea did tend to cement the misconception that animal research only involves 'testing' drugs at advanced stages of development (as discussed in Chapter 2).

It was hard to get across the nuances of the role of animal research in the development of medication right through from its early bioscience beginnings through product development, and this idea did not help. Some participants thought it would be possible to count the exact numbers of animals harmed in drug/product development of the product, from earliest beginnings, showing that they did not really understand the different ways that scientific knowledge is produced, and the different roles of animal research within this.

**Participant:** *I want however many animals have suffered to be written on the inside.*

**Expert:** *You'd need an inlay card that was about a mile long to fit on all the experiments which have led to the development of that medication.*

**Cardiff, E1**

Plus, it was not generally known by participants in advance of the discussions that some of the animal use in drug development is mandated by law. Therefore, the further argument about whether the animals had in fact contributed to the drug's development, or whether the animals' use had been a legal requirement only, was not considered, except by one or two participants who followed this train of thought.

Overall, despite these caveats, this idea is interesting to and supported by the public and might provide a good start point for engaging people with the idea that animal research has had a role in most medical development; perhaps through a small logo to be placed on all medication.

*To show some appreciation about what they did to the mice.*

**London, E1**

*Well why don't they hold their hands up and say these were the animals that helped us make a break though?*

**Cardiff, E1**

#### 5.1.4 Open days

The idea of open days and visits was suggested in the talking head film from LSHTM and all groups welcomed the idea. Importantly, participants liked the idea of learning more about the process of animal research:

- What a lab looks like;
- What typical housing environments comprise;
- Who the researchers are; and
- What sorts of animals they use.

They pointed out, though, that this could only ever be an attempt from the research sector to educate and build relationships, particularly in the local area. They did not see it as an opportunity for the public to engage in scrutiny of the sector and wanted to be sure that if open days take place, they are not considered as a substitute for spot checks from a qualified inspectorate.

*Anything could be staged for one day.*

**London, E2**

*An open day is just about promotion, it's a sugar-coated opinion.*

**Manchester, E2**

Participants also warned that the uptake of the open days might be minimal, unless there was considerable promotion done by the lab.

*Probably no-one normal would even go to the open day – just people really pro or anti.*

**London, E2**

In summary, then, open days were seen as a 'nice to have', but not a significant plank in convincing the public that the industry is being more open; other forms of education and information provision (such as images of procedures and education about weaknesses and benefits of research and amount and level of suffering) were seen as more important.

### **5.1.5 No appetite for signage**

**All institutions or research bodies using animals in scientific research should display signage to this effect**

Every group rejected this idea. While they conceded that those doing animal research could and should be proud to do it, and to be prepared to be open about what it involves, participants felt that putting up a sign on the premises would not increase openness but would make the institution a target for saboteurs.

*Animal protestors are there in Moorgate. One lady tried to give a leaflet and said "Thank you for not caring" – if they could do that what would they do to a researcher?? I didn't like their aggression.*

**London, E2**

## 6. The medium as well as the message: channels of communication

### Summary

The channel through which the public learns about animal research is likely to affect their views. Participants wanted to see information through the following channels:

- **Online:** Participants were not a very critical public when it came to sources. Internet literacy levels vary widely; many UK internet users only have a smart phone, so detailed information may be hard to convey.
- **School curriculum and university education:** universities giving Tedx talks or sharing information with adults.
- **Face to face local involvement:** open days but also the chance for local people to sit as lay people on ethics panels.
- **TV,** such as documentaries, which discuss animal research from a number of different sides. The animal research sector must deal with the media and be confident to talk about the successes as well as the weaknesses of research, and documentary makers should bring the nuanced arguments around animal research to the public consciousness rather than promoting a black and white debate.

### 6.1 Online channels

The 'homework' task we gave was simple: "Find out more about animal research online". We did not specify where they should look or the search terms they should use. Those who were not online were asked to interview a friend using the information pack we provided containing the materials from Event 1. Most managed to look online and several did both sets of homework.

The way homework was approached reflected different levels of internet literacy and also different ways the subject had been grasped in Event 1. A minority in all three locations had searched for 'animal research in UK', or for research happening near them, the majority had just typed 'animal research' into Google. Participants tended to have started with one website, perhaps looked at a second, and there the majority stopped.

The sites most typically found included: the UAR site; a BBC site describing the ethical dilemmas of animal research; and various news stories from July 2013 about statistics showing the numbers of animals used in research rising.

Broadsheets tended to be trusted and admired for being balanced.

*I looked at the Telegraph newspaper - they give balanced argument, the pros and cons. it's saying about numbers of the animals, an increase of 8% last year. In comparison with animals that are killed for food it's not that significant but they still say even though it's small we should still consider it.*

**Manchester, E2**

The UAR site was mentioned by a few in each group as being clear, straightforward, and containing interesting nuggets of information for different audiences.

*Understanding Animal Research was open and transparent. I discovered crabs can feel pain, but they are not covered by legislation because they thought they couldn't feel pain, but they can. Good to know.*

**Manchester, E2**

*Understanding Animal Research had different types of students', journalists' and policy makers' information.*

**London, E2**

A few in Manchester had found animal protection sites and seemed more critical of these than of sites put together by the animal research sector (e.g. UAR).

*On PETA's website they have a lot of details, the animals suffer loneliness, depression anxiety, but I think it's so biased, there's not any success stories.*

**Manchester, E2**

Some had found discussion forums and were not sure whether these reflected expert views or just the views of other uninformed members of the public.

*Online, it's often just forums, so you don't know if it's the truth or not.*

**Manchester, E2**

However, most participants did not seem to have been particularly critical or enquiring of any of the sources found. Plenty of information was relayed back to us, but went more or less unquestioned.

*I looked at the Home Office website and nothing appeared to be untoward.*

**Cardiff, E2**

When we asked how they judged whether the information was correct or not, most said they had not really thought about this, or felt there was no real way to check because information could be manipulated.

*You can do deals with google to get it to the top of a range of searches.*

**London, E2**

Those with lower levels of internet literacy had written or cut and pasted chunks of text from the site and simply read these out to us. A couple of participants across the workshops had searched for “cruelty to animals”, a slight misunderstanding of the thrust of the topic.

Those with higher levels of internet literacy, usually those from higher socio-demographic groups, had found the Home Office website and several complained that it was difficult to use or that the information they expected had not been there. However, a few managed to find some summary statistics on animal use and details of licensing, and relayed these back to us.

*The Home Office site tells you all the ins and outs about when the sector can have the licences.*

### **London, E2**

The younger members of the groups, and those from lower socio-demographic groups, were often using smartphones rather than PCs, tablets or laptops to get online. Therefore, the amount of detailed information they had been able to see and absorb was limited. For example, one woman in Cardiff had found the UAR website and knew it contained a timeline of animal research but had not been able to see it properly. These limited access points are worth remembering if designing an online strategy to engage the public as a whole.

Having said this, all participants saw websites as the most important repository for information provided by the Home Office or the sector. Participants wanted institutions' own websites to provide user friendly information and signpost it clearly. They wanted information by project and in layman's terms. Some suggested that a well-laid out website would be important to help the public better get to grips with a large quantity of information.

A minority also said that the Home Office information should certainly be available to those without internet access if they apply to receive it.

## **6.2 Education and outreach**

In all locations participants mentioned that animal research should be part of the school curriculum and that young people should discuss it from an early stage.

*Incorporate animal research into schools. A body represents the industry, with leaflets and talks in schools, inform them.*

### **Cardiff, E2**

However there was also a call for other forms of education, such as in Manchester participants suggested the sector carry out Tedx talks demonstrating where things go well and where there are ethical or other challenges.

Universities could also conduct outreach work.

*When I was doing my googling, I saw the uni of something or other on their website they carried out they had a forum to speak about the animal research and talks and debates about them.*

**London, E2**

### 6.3 Face to face involvement locally

Some participants in Cardiff and Manchester had looked to see what animal research was being conducted local to them. There was some interest in having access to, or connection with, local facilities. This suggests that open days may be of interest to local people (despite the concern from some participants that they would not be widely taken up).

There was a more nuanced request which came into the summaries from one or two groups at the end of Event 2. These groups felt that local animal research organisations and facilities need to reach out to local people and give them some involvement in decision making. Lay local people could sit on ethics or welfare groups or do internships, become more informed, and therefore have the option of discussing animal research at a more sophisticated level. This was felt to show a genuine desire for openness from the industry and would be more valuable than simply showing people around on an open day.

*At regular intervals they should award people scholarships, a group of people come in, say 20 people to sit in as part of the workforce, with limited things they can do.*

**Cardiff, E2**

### 6.4 Television and the media

In all groups participants mentioned that there was a lack of positive stories about animal research within the media.

*It's only on TV if things go pearshaped and it should be different.*

**Manchester, E1**

Participants wanted to see informative documentaries about different areas of research. However, some recognised that producing these from within the sector might lead to accusations of bias, so it would be more convincing to see neutral media outlets engage on a real exploration of the sector, without sensationalising either the value of animal research or its down sides.

Participants did not engage with the idea of animal research institutions running press offices *per se*, but did say that the sector should justify the use of animals, describe how they are used, and be happy to talk about animal use in leaflets and face to face. This, they felt, would scale up public awareness that the sector exists. They did not want the sector to promote animal research in a biased way (they wanted weaknesses and limitations to be discussed as well as benefits). They did not want the sector to sanitise the harms to animals; but they did want to make the debates and discussions around animal research more a part of everyday life.

## 7. Conclusions & Recommendations

### Public support for openness

Overall, participants in this dialogue were keen that the sector should be open, and welcome its aim to be more transparent. They understand that the reasons for a lack of transparency are possibly historical, and believe there is an inherent difficulty of communicating about a sector which involves harm to animals.

However, if the public are to believe that the sector is genuinely committed to openness, there are several key principles the sector must adhere to.

1. A drive to openness will need **clear messaging** from the sector as to why openness is important. If the public do not know why the sector wants to be more open now, they will suspect either that the sector just wants to simulate openness for public relations purposes, or that they are communicating with the public because of some behaviour they are encouraging the public to adopt (for instance choosing different medication where possible, or refusing to buy products tested on animals).

Stakeholders, such as the animal welfare and protection groups who helped create materials for this dialogue, are deeply sceptical about the motivations of the sector and will also need considerable convincing that the sector is prepared to be open about the weaknesses of animal research and any mistakes which are made.

2. The public want the sector to demonstrate its commitment to openness by creating greater **scrutiny of itself**. This scrutiny should be done by independent eyes and the results should be made available to the public. Other communications efforts, if done without scrutiny, may not be seen as genuine efforts to be open.
3. After the dialogue revealed the number of nuanced arguments which exist about the harms and benefits of animal research, participants felt that the public need to be **educated about these nuances** in order to be able to weigh up the harms and benefits of animal research. This will involve the sector being clear about the 3Rs, the harms and benefits of animal research, and presenting a lot more accurate and unbiased information about what actually happens to animals before, during and after procedures.

### How to communicate with the public?

Different publics are likely to need different approaches.

- For stakeholders and informed lay public:
  - Give evidence of independent scrutiny – without this, openness efforts are likely to be deeply mistrusted.
  - Allow comments on licences before the Home Office accepts them
  - Provide clear and detailed information about how many animals are actually used, for what purposes and under what circumstances, by institution.

- For the general public:
  - Increase awareness that the sector exists and its size.
  - Bust the myths (e.g. it is all done for cosmetics, researchers can use great apes, all procedures are severe, all procedures are mild and so on).
  - Give information about how many animals are actually used, crucially how much they suffer and how and why they are killed.
  - Allow the public in where possible – people were interested in research happening near them and want to learn more.