

The Transparency Gap.

Q: What is this report called, and who wrote it?

The report is titled “The Transparency Gap”. It was written by Linda Birr-Pixton from the Alliance for Cruelty Free Science. It’s dated February 23, 2026, and focuses on animal research in the UK.



Q: What law does the report talk about?

It discusses the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (usually called ASPA). This is the main UK law that regulates the use of animals in scientific experiments and research. It was updated (especially in 2012) to include rules from an EU directive. ASPA requires detailed records about every part of animal use in labs, from breeding to the end of experiments.

Q: What does the report say about the UK collecting data about animal research?

The UK has one of the world’s most detailed systems for tracking animal research. Under ASPA, labs must keep records in 38 specific areas (grouped into 7 main categories). These cover everything in an animal’s life under the rules:

- Who holds the licences and key staff roles
- How animals are bred, bought, identified, and their genetics
- How animals are used, reused, moved, or disposed of (including rehoming)
- Daily health, welfare, care, and any problems
- What procedures are done, how much suffering (severity) happens, and techniques used
- Training and supervision of staff
- Overall statistics, any rule-breaking, and reports This gives a full picture of animal numbers, suffering levels, and care standards.

Q: How much of this information is actually available to the public right now?

Not much in detail. The report divides the 38 areas into three levels:

- Fully Reported — Very little; almost none with full, clear details per lab or project.
- Partially Reported — Some info comes out, but only in summaries or totals (e.g., national yearly statistics on animal numbers and severity levels, or “Non-Technical Summaries” [NTS] for each project that explain aims and expected/actual suffering in simple language—but these are anonymised).
- Undisclosed — Most detailed records stay private inside labs or with the Home Office regulator (ASRU), often because of Section 24 of ASPA (which protects confidential info) or data protection rules.

This creates a “transparency gap”: the public, MPs, and even many experts see only high-level numbers, not the full story of what happens to animals or how well welfare rules are followed.

Q: Why does the report say about why more openness on all 38 areas is important?

Full details would show if the system really works to protect animals and follow the “3Rs” (Replacement of animals, Reduction in numbers, Refinement to reduce suffering).

It would help spot poor care, unnecessary experiments, or slow progress toward non-animal methods.

Right now, aggregated (combined) data hides problems, makes it hard for the public or Parliament to check things properly, and leaves the system feeling “self-policing.”

Q: What does the report suggest to fix this transparency problem?

It lists practical “workarounds” that can be done right away without changing the law or breaking privacy/data rules (like Section 24, UK GDPR). Examples include:

- Publishing anonymised (no names/identifiers) summaries for each lab, e.g., “Lab type X had 12% severe procedures, rehomed 8% of animals, had 3 welfare issues.”
- Making Non-Technical Summaries more detailed with actual severity results and 3Rs progress for every project.
- Requiring labs to publish simple annual transparency reports (could be voluntary at first or added as a licence rule).
- Adding more anonymised breakdowns in the yearly national statistics (e.g., severity per project type or lab category).

These ideas are already used successfully in places like Switzerland, Belgium (Flanders), and New Zealand.

Q: How could this report be used by ordinary people, campaigners, or politicians?

It gives a clear roadmap anyone can use to push for better openness:

- Campaign groups can share it to demand the Home Office and labs adopt these changes.
- MPs or the public can ask questions in Parliament or via Freedom of Information requests, pointing to these exact workarounds.
- It shows the barrier is not legal—it’s about political will and culture in government/labs.
- If more details were released (anonymised and safe), it could build public trust, speed up the shift to non-animal science, reduce animal suffering, and help the UK lead in ethical research.

The report argues: the data already exists, the law allows anonymised sharing, and all that’s needed is the decision to do it.