

Safeguarding Children around Dogs



Introduction

The benefits of owning pets are well established. Living in a pet owning household can have physical and emotional benefits for children as well as teaching them about responsibility and caring for living creatures. However, in recent years a number of children of different ages have been seriously injured or have died from attacks by dogs, and it is important therefore that professionals working with children and families are aware of the issues around dangerous dogs and the risks they can pose to children & young people.

Further information

- [Blue Cross- Be safe with dogs - a guide for families](#)
- [The Kennel Club Safe & Sound Programme - Resources for schools](#)
- [Institute of Health Visiting - Keeping babies and children safe around dogs in the home](#)
- [Dogs and Children: CAPT's Top tips to keep them safe and happy together](#)

Why it matters?

All children are potentially vulnerable from an attack by a dog, but very young children are likely to be at greatest risk. A young child will be unaware of the potential dangers they could face and will be less able to protect themselves. Small children are of a size that leaves especially vulnerable parts of their body exposed.

What else should I consider?

Observation of the care and treatment of family pets can provide useful information about family functioning, neglect and/or violence and abuse within the household. More information in the 7 Minute Briefing on [the links between the abuse of animals and children and vulnerable adult](#).

Minute briefing

Which dog breeds are dangerous?

Any breed of dog can pose a risk of causing an injury to a person, however there are four breeds currently outlawed in the UK, these include: Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino and Fila Brasileiro. Remember that any dog with even the mildest temperament can bite in any given situation and children are often bitten by dogs they know within their own home or those of family members and friends.

When do I need to take action?

Where it is the professional judgement of the practitioner that a dog presents a risk to a child or be inappropriate (i.e. size, breed, temperament) for the family, a referral to [Warwickshire's Children & Families Integrated Front Door](#) should be made.

Why do dogs bite?

There are many reasons why a dog may bite. They may be protecting themselves or their property, they may be in pain, they may feel trapped or cornered, they may have been woken up/ surprised/startled by your actions or sudden movements or they may be very excited. Biting is only one way a dog can injure a person. Children can also be injured by dogs knocking them or pulling them over.