

Introduction

In recent history there have been numerous studies that have concluded that being a pet owner can be both hugely rewarding and known to have benefitted the health of the owner. There is no doubt that the UK as a whole enjoys having pets- with the most recent findings showing over eleven million pet dogs over the last year. However, with more dog ownership, there is also considered to be more of a risk.

Last year within the West Midlands County there were 1092 offences where a dog was dangerously out of control and injured a person or assistance dog. This averages to around three offences per day on average, this is a staggering jump in statistics from 630 in 2018. These incidents have demonstrated that guidance on dangerous dogs is needed now in order to better protect the people of Coventry.

Prohibited dogs

Certain dogs breeds are 'prohibited' and if any person or agency has knowledge on a dog of these types it should be reported to the police immediately:

- Pit Bull Terrier
- Japanese Tosa
- Dogo Argentino
- Fila Brasileiro
- XL Bully* From 1st February 2024 unless the dog has a valid certificate of exemption



Any dog can be 'dangerous' if it has already been known to inflict or threaten injury. Injuries inflicted by certain types of dogs are likely to be especially serious and damaging. Strong, powerful dogs such as Pit Bull types will often use their back jaws (as opposed to 'nipping') and powerful neck muscle to shake their victims violently as they grasp.

Risk factors to keep in mind

- Many commentators will insist that 'the owner, not the dog' is the problem.
- There will be occasions when even the 'best' of owners fails to anticipate or prevent their dog's behaviour.
- The care, control and context of a dog's environment will undoubtedly impact on their behaviour and potential risks.
- Research indicates that neutered or spayed dogs are less likely to be territorial and aggressive towards other dogs and people.
- Dogs that are kept and/or bred for the purpose of fighting, defending, or threatening are likely to present more risks than genuine pets.
- Some dogs are kept as a status symbol and can be part of the criteria of belonging to a gang.



One Minute Guide

Dangerous Dogs

October 2023

The Dog and Child: Family Context

Particular attention should be paid while the baby is non-mobile, or similarly with a non-mobile disabled child and physical barriers may need to be put in place.









All children are potentially vulnerable from attack(s) from dog(s). Young and very small children are likely to be at greatest risk. A young child may be unaware and unprepared for the potential dangers they could face and may be less able to protect themselves and more likely to be of a size that leaves especially vulnerable parts of their body exposed to any 'assault'. Is the dog left alone with the child? **If you consider a dog to be a serious risk to a child, you should contact the police immediately.**



Children's services

A referral should be made to children's social services if any of the following criteria are reached:

-  The child injured is under two years of age
-  The child is under five years of age and injuries have required medical treatment
-  The child is over five years and under 16 and has been injured more than once by the same dog
-  The child is between five years and 18 years and the injuries are significant
-  The child/young person is under 16 years of age, injuries have required medical treatment and initial information suggests the dog responsible could be prohibited and/or dangerous
-  A prohibited and/or dangerous dog is reported and/or treated and is believed to be living with and/or frequently associated with children under five years

More serious cases might prompt further and more formal discussions with other agencies including Strategy Discussions:

As with all other assessments **"the welfare of the child is paramount"**.

If agencies cannot be satisfied that any further risks will be addressed, they should consider all statutory options open to them to protect the child or remove the dog(s).

Practitioner Guidance

Any agency aware of a dog that could be prohibited or dangerous should collect as much information as possible including:

- The dog's name and breed (if known)
- Size of the dog – large, medium, or small
- The current owner and any previous owners known, including gender
- Has the original owner any previous convictions?
- Details of family members, particularly children
- Why did the owner choose this particular breed of dog, temperament or because the owner felt sorry for it etc?
- Obtain a photograph of the dog if possible.
- Clear discussions with the owner regarding planned management of the dog where there are children in the household or wider family.



It is understood that professionals may not be able to collect all information, but they should try to obtain as much as possible.

Where the agency/individual is unsure; advice should be sought from Police colleagues

Other questions that should be considered if possible include:

1. Is the dog's owner usually present?
2. Is the dog exercised outside the property - daily, weekly, never?
3. Does the dog have off lead exercise - daily, weekly, never?
4. Does the dog live in a yard/garden - always, sometimes, never?
5. Does the dog destroy/chew things - always, sometimes, never?
6. Does the dog get fed from the owner's plate at mealtimes?
7. Has the dog ever been involved in a biting incident with another dog?
8. Has the dog ever bitten a person?
9. Was the dog chosen for its breed or its temperament?
10. Does the owner have any previous convictions?
11. What size is the dog?
12. Is the dog fed from human plates at mealtimes?



Any Agency that is aware of an injury to a child, caused by a dog or treating an injury to a child caused by a dog, should establish precisely when and how the injuries were caused. They should ask if and when there were any previous or similar injuries to the child.

Consideration should be given to whether the injuries caused are “non accidental injuries.”

RSPCA Reporting

If you suspect an animal to be in unsuitable and unsafe conditions, suffering from cruelty or neglect, you can report the situation to the RSPCA. Before you call the RSPCA to report cruelty or neglect make sure you have as many of the following details as possible so that the situation can be assessed and prioritised appropriately: your name, address and telephone number, the date, time and location/address, a description of the dogs environment and bodily condition, the name(s) and address(es) of the person(s) involved, the names and addresses of any witnesses and the registration of any vehicle involved.

West Midlands Police – Reporting a Dangerous Dog

The West Midlands Police have created an online portal explaining the steps that will take place following an investigation. The following link can be used to access the page, in which the necessary details are inputted by the user: [West Midlands Police Dangerous Dogs](#). If any individual witnesses either an attack or an incident in which a dog is dangerously out of control, you must call 999 emergency services. The online portal is generally for reporting previous incidents and known dangerous dogs. In order to see the advice and recommendations within the process use the link provided above, select the situation that is most applicable to the situation and click 'see my options' as shown in the image below.



YOUR SITUATION

<p>I want to report a dangerous dog You want to report a dog that is acting aggressively now or has bitten someone</p> <p>+</p>	<p>I want to report an attack on a support dog You want to report a dog attack against a support or guide dog</p> <p>+</p>	<p>I want to report a dog attacking another dog You want to report an incident where a dog has attacked another dog</p> <p>+</p>
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SEE MY OPTIONS

Key Contacts and Further Information

[Coventry Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

[West Midlands Police Dangerous Dogs](#)

[Dangerous Dogs Act 1991](#)

[Coventry and Warwickshire Dangerous Dogs Guidance](#)

[RSPCA](#)

[Dogs Trust](#)

[Child Accident Prevention Trust](#)

[Battersea Dogs and Cats Home](#)