

Safeguarding Children From Dog Bites



Cwm Taf Morgannwg
Bwrdd Diogelu
Safeguarding Board

1) Background

Over the past 10 years, there has been an increase of 76% of hospital admissions for children due to dog bites.

This guidance provides information to those working with families and children and explains:

- The situations where children are most likely to be vulnerable.
- The advice to be given to families with regard to dog and child safety and to prevent dog bite or attack.
- The basis for an effective assessment of risk and the criteria that should prompt a referral to Children's Social Care or other agencies.

7) Further information

Blue Cross

www.bluecross.org.uk

[Keeping your toddler safe around dogs leaflet](#)

RSPCA

www.rspca.org.uk

[Dogs and children – a guide to staying safe leaflet](#)

Reporting Cruelty to the RSPCA

- 24-hour cruelty line - call 0300 1234 999 to report cruelty or an animal in distress (sick, injured or trapped animal).

2) Situations where children are most likely to be vulnerable

Bites on 0-4 year olds are usually on the face and head and by a familiar dog in family setting.

Older children are more likely to be bitten on the hand or arm, by an unfamiliar dog out in the open.

In a number of cases death from dog attack has occurred when the child is in the care of another (e.g. grandparent).

Serious dog bites or attacks, requiring hospitalisation, are more frequent among children from more deprived areas than children from less deprived areas.

The owner of the dog is often not present when the fatal attack occurs and in some cases the attack has occurred when the dog has had unsupervised access to the child.



6) When to refer to Children's Services

The child/young person is under 18 years of age, injuries have required medical treatment and initial information suggests the dog responsible could be prohibited and/or dangerous or the parents have acted irresponsibly.

Where parents/carers are believed to be exposing a child to or failing to protect a child from a dog who is believed to be dangerous or prohibited.

3) Preventing bites and attacks

The most important advice is to **never leave a baby or young child unsupervised with a dog**, no matter how well known the dog is. This must be emphasised by practitioners to families with dogs and the advice to be recorded.

The Blue Cross and RSPCA have produced resources on keeping children safe from dogs and practitioners should give or direct any families with a dog or have contact with a dog, towards these resources.

4) Effective assessment of risk

Dogs that have been ill-treated/abused or kept in inappropriate conditions are more likely to be aggressive.

Dogs that are kept and/or bred for the purpose of fighting, defending or threatening are likely to present more risks than genuine pets.

Families, who experience high levels of aggression and domestic tensions including domestic violence, are more likely to trigger excitement and possible attacks by dogs.

Very young children living in chaotic or dysfunctional families are likely to be especially vulnerable to attack from dogs through lack of supervision and care.

5) When to refer to Children's Services

There are clear links between animal cruelty and the capacity for child cruelty.

Where parents/carers have been advised not to leave a baby or young child unattended with a dog and continue to do so.

A child injured by dog bite is under five years of age.