

## What is Animal Abuse?

Animal abuse is defined as intentional harm of animals, including wilful neglect, inflicting injury, pain or distress or malicious killing of animals.

There is evidence of links between the abuse of children, adults with care and support needs and animals.

A child displaying intentional cruelty to animals could indicate that the child has been a victim of neglect / abuse themselves.

Animal cruelty may be used to control and intimidate children and adults and force them into being silent about their own abuse.

If serious animal abuse occurs within a household there may be an increased likelihood of family violence, and increased risk of abuse to children within the family

## Professionals working with animals

Professionals working with animals should receive training about recognition of abuse and referral processes to enable them to raise appropriate concerns about children.

## One Minute Guide

### Animal Abuse

April 2025



### Key Contacts and Further Information

- [Coventry Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)
- RSPCA website  
<https://www.rspca.org.uk/utilities/contactus>

## How should professionals respond?

Professionals working with children should:

- Be observant about the care and treatment of family pets and use this to inform your assessment.
- Ensure that assessments consider the needs and the risk of harm to children (and animals) within the family.
- Ensure that safety planning with victims of domestic violence and abuse considers the safety of children and animals within the family.

## Referrals

To make a referral to Children's Services: **02476 788 555**

Out of hours Emergency Duty Team: **02476 83 2222**

If a child is in immediate danger ring the police: **999**

RSPCA national cruelty and advice line: **0300 1234999** (When a referral is made to children's social care the name of the RSPCA inspector should not be given to the family unless this has been formally agreed between the two agencies. The reason for this is that the RSPCA inspector may need to do repeat visits to the household to monitor an animal's welfare.)