

Which Dog Breeds are Outlawed?

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, Fila Brasileiro and XL Bully (from 01-02-24).

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 there is a report of a child having been injured by a dog or 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 your local MASH should be considered. The Police should be immediately informed if a dog is prohibited and/or dangerous, if a dog bite or attack is significant, or there is a belief that the dog is an ongoing risk.

Further information and resources

[Safe and Sound Award Scheme](#) | [Dog training](#) | [The Kennel Club](#)
[Understanding dog body language & staying safe](#) | [Blue Cross](#)
[Dogs and Children](#) | [Top tips to keep them safe and happy together \(capt.org.uk\)](#)
[Dog safety Archives](#) | [Child Accident Prevention Trust \(capt.org.uk\)](#)
[Dogs and children: living safely together](#) | [Dogs Trust](#)

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 several 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 feel confident to promote dog safety and are aware of the issues around dangerous dogs and the risks they can pose to children and young people.

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. 70% of dog bites in children occur on the head.

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. There are well documented links between the abuse of animals and children and vulnerable adults.

Dog Safety Essentials

The RSPCA and the Dogs Trust both recommend two essentials for keeping a child safe:

- **close supervision** when dogs and children are together.
- understanding a **dog's body language**.

Close Supervision/Advice

Close supervision can feel like a big ask but it can be broken down into three key things:

- **Stay close** – watch, listen and stay close so that you can respond before anything bad happens.
- **Step – in** – intervene if your dog or your child is behaving unsafely or if either one looks uncomfortable.
- **Separate** – keep children and dogs separate when you know you're likely to be distracted, like during the morning rush, making the dinner, or answering the front door. You can use a safety gate, put your dog in another room, or take your child or dog with you.

Dog's Body Language

A dog's body language tells you how they're feeling. Being able to spot the signs early and separate a dog and a child helps to stop a situation from becoming risky.

The RSPCA outlines distinct behaviours that dogs show when they are worried and when they are angry or very unhappy. Examples include:

- A worried dog may have their head low and ears back with tail tucked.
- An angry dog may have a tense body, weight forward with their ears and tail up, looking directly at you.

Why do Dogs Bite?

The RSPCA reports that most bites occur in the home, where typical high risk human behaviours include approaching a dog when it's eating, sleeping, or in pain. Dogs may also bite due to protecting themselves or their property, they may feel trapped or concerned, 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.