

PROCEDURES AND GUIDANCE

Animal Abuse and Links to Abuse of Children and Vulnerable Adults

Date of original document	December 2017
Date document reviewed	
Date for next review	December 2020



ANIMAL ABUSE AND LINKS TO ABUSE OF CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

Animal abuse is defined as intentional harm of animals, including willful neglect, inflicting injury, pain or distress or malicious killing of animals. There is increasing evidence of links between abuse of children, vulnerable adults and animals.

In addition, a child displaying intentional cruelty to animals could indicate that the child has been a victim of neglect and/or abuse themselves. In some circumstances, acts of animal cruelty may be used to control and intimidate adults and children into being silent about their own abuse.

Professionals in all agencies should be aware that 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 such that it could constitute significant harm. Significant harm is defined as a situation where a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, a degree of physical, sexual and/or emotional harm (through abuse or neglect), which is so harmful that there needs to be compulsory intervention by child protection agencies into the life of the child and their family.

Professionals working with children should:

- Be observant about the care and treatment of family pets whilst carrying out assessments;
- 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 considers the safety of children and animals within the family.
- Professionals working with animals should receive training* about recognition and referral processes to enable them to raise appropriate concerns about children and their safety.

When a referral is made to Local Authority Children's Social Care the name of the RSPCA inspector should not be given to the family unless this has been agreed between the two agencies as essential for evidential reasons. The reason for this is that the RSPCA inspector may need to do repeat visits to the household to monitor an animal's welfare.

To report animal cruelty, request assistance or express a concern about animal welfare, call the RSPCA's ***national 24-hour cruelty and advice line***: **0300 1234 999**, or contact on the link:

<https://www.rspca.org.uk/utilities/contactus/reportcruelty>

*To access the East Riding Safeguarding Children Board (ERSCB) Inter-Agency Training Programme use the link: <HTTP://WWW.ERSCB.ORG.UK/TRAINING/>