

Concerns about animals when responding to domestic abuse incidents

While responding to domestic abuse incidents, our partner agencies may see animals who are at risk. The RSPCA wants to ensure better protection for those animals, as well as the people the agencies are working with.

It is key that our partner agencies know how to report their concerns effectively, as well as how to signpost people to the correct services for support and help with their animals. This guidance is for England and Wales. For support in Scotland, please contact the [Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals](#).

- If you have any questions about this guidance, please contact the RSPCA at: politicalaffairs@rspca.org.uk

We recognise that responding to sensitive and challenging incidents such as domestic abuse often needs a multi-agency approach and in all our work we try to work collaboratively with partners across the board. We have worked with South Yorkshire Police and Lincolnshire Domestic Abuse Partnership, part of Lincolnshire County Council, to try and ensure the information and process works for all concerned. We are grateful for their support with this document and hope it is helpful for our partners.

Animals in a domestic abuse situation

People often refer to animals as 'family members' and 'best friends'. For survivors of domestic abuse, animals may be their only source of comfort, companionship and love. Perpetrators may often exploit this bond and abuse animals as a means of coercing and controlling survivors. Any species or breed of animal may be abused. What makes certain animals a target for abuse is the significance of the bond between them and survivors.

- For more information about the links between human and animal abuse, see the [Links Group](#) website.

The RSPCA's role

We are keen to work with our colleagues in the public sector to assist where we can, however it should be noted that RSPCA officers have no powers of arrest, search or seizure. So, if entry is refused, we will need to risk assess the situation and consider seeking assistance from the police to secure entry. More information about the role of our officers can be found on our website: [RSPCA](#)

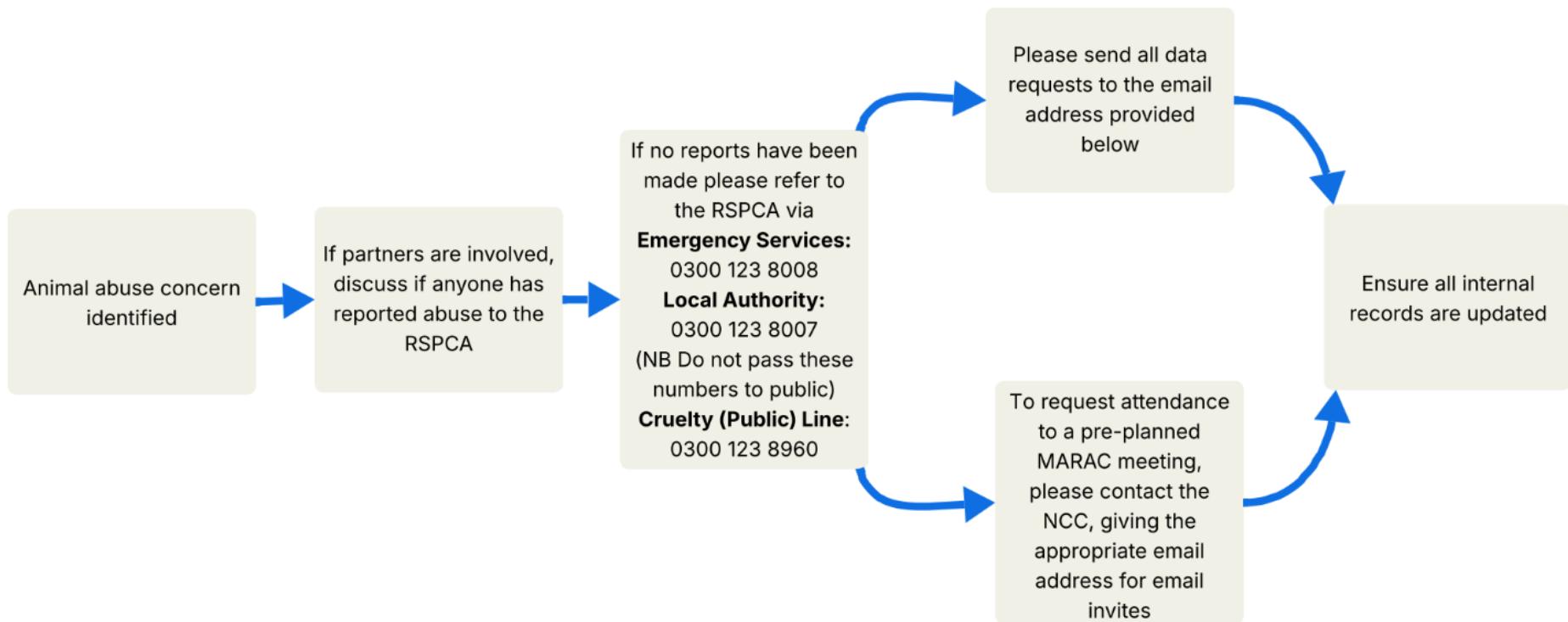
Reporting incidents of cruelty and neglect to the RSPCA

- Police, fire and rescue, and ambulance services. Call us on: 0300 123 8008, please check our website for opening times. [Report A Concern | RSPCA](#)
- Local authorities. Call us on: 0300 123 8007 (the opening times are the same as above.)
- For all other partners please call 0300 123 8960 (the opening times are the same as above.)

Please do not share these numbers with members of the public.

If you have concerns for an animal, for example after having visited a location, we will log your call and triage it to assess the urgency of the situation. Please note that we have very limited resources so calls have to be prioritised.

However, if you have concerns about an animal where another body or individual has a responsibility – for example, a stray dog where the local authority is the lead responder, or a sudden death where the next of kin is responsible – please contact them instead. We have produced guidance called [Who is responsible for what in animal welfare?](#) as it can be difficult to know who to contact about different situations.



Requests for information relating to a person of interest

If you would like to ask the RSPCA for any information we may hold about a person of interest to you then a data protection request can be completed and sent to: data.protection@rspca.org.uk

If you would like one of our officers to attend a pre-planned MARAC meeting, please call our National Control Centre (NCC) on: 0300 123 8008/ 0300 123 8007. You will need to provide a contact email so we can get back to you to make arrangements. The NCC will contact the local RSPCA Chief Inspector, who will allocate the most appropriate resource; this could be a local officer or a referral to the Field Investigations Team (FIT).

RSPCA reporting of concerns about humans at risk

RSPCA officers attend properties and engage with people every day and can come across incidents of suspected domestic abuse as part of an animal welfare investigation.

Signs of domestic abuse can be incredibly subtle so we encourage our officers to use the [National Domestic Abuse Helpline](#) if they feel they have witnessed this abuse or have suspicions that it has taken place. Where children are present the NSPCC should be informed. We also cross-report our concerns with the police. In an emergency situation our officers will dial 999.

Help with animals needing to be removed from a domestic abuse incident

We rescue so many animals from neglect and abuse that sadly we do not have the space to offer temporary fostering services. However, a number of charities and support agencies offer pet fostering services and advice to owners fleeing domestic violence. We outline their scope and contact details, below.

Freedom Project (Dogs Trust)	
Provides support for dog owners finding freedom from domestic abuse.	
Areas covered	National
Website	dogstrustfreedom.org.uk
Contact details	All regional phone numbers are listed here: dogstrustfreedom.org.uk/en/contact-us Email: freedomproject@dogstrust.org.uk

Live Fear Free

A 24-hour free phone helpline for survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence in Wales. Offers support and advice and also has access to an online refuge availability database.

Areas covered	Wales
Website	welshwomensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/live-fear-free-helpline and gov.wales/live-fear-free
Contact details	Helpline: 0808 80 10 800 Email: info@livefearfreehelpline.wales Text message on: 07458 153415

Lifeline (formerly Paws Protect) (Cats Protection)

Provides a specialist cat fostering service for those fleeing domestic abuse.

Areas covered	London, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Anglia, Essex, Kent, Midlands, Sussex, Surrey, Yorkshire and Wales.
Website	cats.org.uk/what-we-do/cp-lifeline
Contact details	London and South East: 0345 260 1280 and lifelinesoutheast@cats.org.uk Yorkshire: 0300 012 0187 and lifelineyorkshire@cats.org.uk East Anglia: 0300 012 0283 and lifelineeastanglia@cats.org.uk The Midlands: 0300 012 0284 and lifelineeastanglia@cats.co.uk Wales: 0300 012 0289 and lifelinewales@cats.org.uk

Break Away (Raystede Centre for Animal Welfare)

Provides an emergency animal fostering service for people fleeing domestic abuse.

Areas covered	Kent, East Sussex, West Sussex
Website	raystede.org/adopt/break-away
Contact details	Tel: 01825 880468 Email: rehomming@raystede.org

Pet Refuge (Mayhew Animal Home)

Provides shelter and care for the pets of people in crisis for short periods of time.

Areas covered	Clients who live within the M25
Scope	Clients need to have accommodation where they can have their pets back i.e. a guaranteed address. So, the service is mainly for people going into hospital or rehab, but it doesn't rule out domestic violence cases if the survivor has a home lined up that allows pets, with an address from the council or a housing association.
Website	themayhew.org/how-we-help/in-our-home/pet-refuge
Contact details	Tel: 0208 962 8000 Email: info@mayhewanimalhome.org

Pet Foster Project (Juno Women's Aid)	
Provides a safe place for the pets of women fleeing domestic abuse.	
Areas covered	Nottinghamshire plus some of Lincolnshire and Derbyshire
Website	junowomensaid.org.uk/pet-foster-project
Contact details	<p>Tel: 07971 337264 or 07587773572 Try the mobile numbers first, but if they're not available, call the 24-hour helpline on: 0808 800 0340 Email: sarahl@junowomensaid.org.uk and joannea@junowomensaid.org.uk</p>

Endeavour (previously Paws for Kids)	
Provides an in-house pet fostering service for the pets of people fleeing an abusive household.	
Areas covered	Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Merseyside, Derbyshire
Website	endeavourproject.org.uk
Contact details	<p>Tel: 01204 394 842 Email: petfostering@endeavourproject.org.uk</p>

Refuge4Pets	
Helps people and pets escape domestic abuse.	
Areas covered	Cornwall and Devon
Website	refuge4pets.org.uk
Contact details	<p>Tel: 0300 4000 121 Email: info@refuge4pets.org.uk</p>