

Abused and neglected, Battersea's new arrivals show the consequences of irresponsible ownership

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Terrified and in pain, Zara the puppy was a sorry sight when she was brought to Battersea Dogs & Cats Home last month. Abused by her owner, she had a broken leg and a serious wound to her ear.

The Home's expert veterinary staff are giving the three-month-old German Shepherd round-the-clock care and fortunately she is responding well to treatment. Despite her dreadful injuries, Zara's trusting nature means she has formed bonds with her carers and shown herself to have a friendly and inquisitive nature.

She is just one of the sad stories the world-renowned charity has taken in over the last two months, which have seen the number of calls from people looking to rehome their dogs soar to 3,186 – almost double last year's figures for September and October.

The reasons behind these calls vary - many are due to changes of circumstance such as house moves or evictions, and sometimes sad and dangerous situations such as domestic abuse where the animal may become a target for violence.

Others are because the owners took on their dog without fully thinking it through, sometimes buying them online or from a so-called breeder and quickly realising they cannot cope with the responsibility of a pet.

These issues will be highlighted tonight at Battersea's annual Collars & Coats Gala Ball, sponsored by Vitabiotics SuperDog and Medivet the Vet, an annual fundraiser that will help support the charity's vital work rescuing and rehabilitating unwanted and abandoned animals. A number of former Battersea residents – many of whom have battled back from the brink after being found neglected or abused - will take to the stage, having found their own happy ending thanks to the charity.

Battersea's Intake Manager, Steven Craddock, said: "While working at Battersea is hugely rewarding, it can be devastating too – especially when we see tragic cases like Zara's. All too often, animals come through Battersea's doors with serious injuries sustained through neglect, cruelty and ignorance. Some have come from puppy farms and have never been properly socialised; others have been used for repeated breeding and are left with shocking health problems as a result.

"In September and October this year, we've seen a huge spike in enquiries from people wishing to rehome their dogs and while they're doing the right thing by bringing their pets in to us so we can find them a new home, it's heartbreaking to see the state that some of these dogs arrive in."

While anybody wishing to rehome a dog or cat from Battersea will be carefully assessed and matched with a suitable animal where possible, the Home is putting in work further afield to ensure the message of responsible ownership is spread far and wide.

Battersea's Community Engagement teams hold workshops in prisons, schools and communities across London to educate people on what it means to take on a pet and to discuss the serious animal welfare issues the Home deals with on a daily basis, including backstreet breeding, animal cruelty and neglect, and puppy farming.

Battersea Dogs & Cats Home gives all potential new owners help and advice before taking on a cat. If you think you can offer a dog or cat a loving new home, please contact us – find out more information [here](#).

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