Battersea concerned at increase in number of dog bites

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Latest NHS figures released today show an increase in the number of hospital admissions due to dog bites – with children being the most affected.

The new data causes great concern to Battersea Dogs & Cats Home, a charity that is continually raising awareness in the community on how important it is that children learn to behave around dogs.

The figures show the number of dog bites and strikes have risen and accounted for 7,227 hospital admissions from March 2014 to February 2015 (up 6.5%)– with 0-9 year olds being the age group most affected.

Sharon Sealey, Battersea's Community Engagement Manager, said: "It's very concerning that so many children are still getting bitten by dogs.

"Battersea believes that this alarming figure could be greatly reduced through better awareness of the body language and habits of dogs and that's one of the reasons why we go into schools and communities to offer advice to help minimise the risk of injury.

"A lot of people and especially young children don't really know how to behave around dogs or how to read a dog's body language. This is why a child should never be left alone with a dog. We know the consequences of this can be serious and sometimes even fatal."

Battersea's Community Engagement team carries out workshops to educate children on how to behave appropriately around animals so they can stay safe in their company. Last year the charity gave advice to 13,400 children and young people in London's communities.

The much-loved rescue centre has also produced a film to help children understand more about safety around dogs.http://www.battersea.org.uk/apex/webarticle?pageId=169-safetyaroundanimals

Battersea has welcomed Government legislation that means that irresponsible owners can now be prosecuted for dog attacks within the home as well as outside the home. This will be where many children might be affected if they are visiting friends' homes and meeting dogs for the first time.

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For more information and images please contact 020 7627 9332 or email press@battersea.org.uk

Notes to editors

• In 2014, Battersea's Community Engagement team delivered 1363 talks on responsible dog ownership to 18615 people, broken down as follows:

• 11526 6-11 year olds

• 1763 12-18 year olds

• 221 18-25 year olds

• 583 25+ years

• The Community Engagement team also attended 69 events dedicated to responsible dog ownership, speaking to 8186 people, providing:

• Established in 1860, Battersea Dogs & Cats Home aims never to turn away a dog or cat in need of our help. We reunite lost dogs and cats with their owners through our Lost Dogs & Cats Line or care for them until new homes can be found for them, giving them shelter and the highest standards of kennelling and veterinary care.

• Since it was founded, Battersea has rescued, reunited and rehomed over 3.1 million dogs and cats.

• A team of over 1100 volunteers help at Battersea's three centres, in roles including dog and cat

socialising, gardening, admin support and giving talks in the community.

• For further information on Battersea Dogs & Cats Home please visit www.battersea.org.uk.

Company Contact:

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