

Right: The BARK Patrol

welfare and a criminal angle, have been collated and monitored much more successfully thanks to the collaboration of the BARK partners involved.

Between January and September 2007 alone, The Mayhew Animal Home has neutered 156 bull breed outpatients, free of charge, at our Community Veterinary Clinic and vaccinated and micro-chipped over 200 bull breeds in our low-cost clinics.



Other London boroughs have heard of BARK's work and we are presently working on a template to put forward to other London boroughs to help address this countrywide problem.

**Claire Harper, Animal Welfare Officer, learnt about the relationship between animal abuse and human violence at a conference in September this year. She explains why this relationship makes initiatives like BARK so essential.**

**D**uring my time at The Mayhew as an Animal Welfare Officer I have seen many cases of people mistreating animals by both neglect and intentional abuse. Thankfully most of the owners I deal with are ignorant of the how their actions cause suffering and once educated they are more than happy to make changes. Unfortunately this is not always the case. When you come across someone who has intentionally caused pain and suffering to an animal it makes you wonder what else they are capable of...

In September this year the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics held a conference exploring the evidence of a link between animal abuse and subsequent human violence. Professionals from around the world spoke on topics that included showing the very real link between domestic violence and pet-abuse within families. A presentation was given by an FBI

Special Agent who spoke of how some of the serial murderers he had dealt with had initially started off torturing animals. Whilst there is obviously a large difference between kicking a dog and committing serial murders it does show that animal abuse can and does lead onto violence towards people. With this in mind it is hoped that tougher sentencing and rehabilitation will be given to people convicted of animal abuse as that is usually the beginnings of a violent future. Social workers are already beginning to recognise the merits of identifying animal abuse as an indication of an abusive home environment and it is hoped they will soon be able to use this as an official indicator when determining children's safety.

Despite the tough subject matter the conference was a huge success; it was wonderful to see so many professionals from across the world meeting to discuss this topic and hopefully work together to reduce the levels of violence to both people and animals. Since returning from the conference The Mayhew intends to work even more closely with local authorities and other groups about this issue, offering practical help and advice wherever possible.



Far left: Carly Jack microchipping Diesel  
Left: Mayhew AWOs, Claire and Carly

## Campaigns

# Working Together

Throughout 2007, The Mayhew has been involved in setting up and developing BARK, a regional London collaborative initiative to tackle the problems of irresponsible dog ownership. We are now starting to see the rewards it reaps, and look to developing it even further in 2008.

**N**owadays the media is full of dog-related stories, more often than not about abused animals, dog-fighting or dogs involved in attacks on children or used as weapons in crime. However, this has not long been the case and it took the tragic death of a young child in Liverpool to put the spotlight on a problem that animal welfare organisations have been trying to bring to the fore for several years.

More than two years ago, the significant increase in the number of Staffordshire Bull Terriers and their crosses coming in through the doors of The Mayhew was reason for us to launch our "SOS - Save our Staffies" Campaign, offering free neutering for Staffies and Staffie crosses and basic animal health and welfare advice to their owners. As word spread about our SOS Campaign, we were increasingly contacted by members of the public and the local Safer Neighbourhood Watch Teams about dogs being used in crime-related incidents and suspected dog-fighting rings.

It became evident that in order to address the problem effectively, collaboration with other local authority groups and welfare organisations was necessary.

Early in 2007, the first meetings were held at The Mayhew with representatives from Brent Council, Metropolitan Police Brent and the local RSPCA inspectors. It was agreed that to combat the huge rise in dog-related issues in the local community



we would work together under the name of BARK (Brent Action for Responsible K9s).

### BARK's mission is

- to educate the community on dog welfare and the implications of responsible ownership;
- to reduce levels of anti-social behaviour linked with the misuse of dogs;
- to reduce the number of incidents where dogs are mistreated;
- to protect and reassure the community by reducing the irresponsible activities involving dogs with the appropriate use of legislation.

**BARK tackles the problem in four ways, through REASSURANCE; INTELLIGENCE; PREVENTION and ENFORCEMENT.**

BARK has been operational now for eight months, but was officially launched in September 2007. It has been a learning process for all partners but each and every one of us is dedicated to addressing this enormous problem. Never has it been made more obvious that animal welfare issues and social welfare issues are inextricably linked.

Our group has now been joined by Brent Housing Partnership and both DEFRA and the GLA have shown an interest in BARK, as since its inception, dog-related issues in Brent, both from an animal