



**Derbyshire
Police and Crime
Commissioner**

*Protecting Communities,
Fighting Crime*



POLICE DOG WELFARE SCHEME

HANDBOOK

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SECTION 1 - BACKGROUND

The death of Police dog 'Acer' whilst in training in Essex, and the subsequent prosecution of police officers, resulted in an understandable loss of public confidence in police dog training methods, generated adverse comment in the media and caused animal welfare organisations such as the RSPCA and the National Canine Defence League (Now Dogs Trust) to stop donating dogs to the service. In response to these issues, the ACPO Police Dog Sub-Committee embarked upon a thorough review of police dog training and developed a six point strategy aimed at restoring public confidence by ensuring that police dog training methods are humane, ethical and transparent.

Central to this issue of re-building public confidence and ensuring that the welfare of animals engaged in police work is maintained and any mistreatment is identified and dealt with promptly, there is a need for transparency. In other words, the training and welfare of animals engaged on police work must be open and, as importantly, be seen to be open. To this end voluntary welfare schemes were introduced in many areas of the country. The schemes enable members of the local community to observe and report upon the conditions under which police dogs are housed, trained and transported.

Originally called 'Animal Welfare Visiting', Derbyshire Police Authority established the scheme in consultation with the Chief Constable of Derbyshire Constabulary, along with the RSPCA and the NCDL (Now Dogs Trust). In November 2011 the scheme was re-named to 'Police Dog Visiting Scheme' to more accurately reflect its remit.

Police Dog Welfare Visitors (PDV's) are independent members of the local community, who may be accompanied by professionals from animal welfare organisations, who visit police dog kennels and training centres unannounced to check on the welfare of animals engaged in police work. They come from a variety of backgrounds and sections of the community and have no direct or indirect involvement in the criminal justice system. This is to prevent possible conflicts of interests for the individual, and to maintain the independence of the scheme as a whole.

The scheme will continue under Police and Crime Commissioner for Derbyshire (the Commissioner), exercised in consultation with the Chief Constable. The Commissioner has the final responsibility in all matters relating to the operation of the scheme.

Objectives of the Scheme

The scheme enables members of the local community, with the assistance of the appropriate national animal welfare organisations, to observe, comment and report on the conditions under which dogs are housed, trained and transported; with a view to securing greater understanding and confidence in these matters. These arrangements also provide an independent check on the way police dog handlers and staff responsible for their care carry out their responsibilities under the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

SECTION TWO - RECRUITMENT AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

Recruitment

The Scheme Administrator within the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) will ensure that adequate numbers of suitably trained Visitors are available at all times and throughout the County to carry out the required programme of visits. Recruitment will be managed through forward planning that focuses on factors such as the total number of active Visitors, the frequency of visits and the level of Visitors retention.

It is considered important that visitors should be representative of the local community and will be recruited from within the boundary of Derbyshire.

The OPCC will aim to provide a suitable balance of Visitors in terms of factors such as age, gender and ethnicity. This inclusive approach will also extend to those with disabilities and those who do not have English as their first language. All reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate applicants in these categories where they are considered suitable candidates.

Prospective visitors will be independent persons of good character who are able to make informed judgements in which the community can have confidence, and which the police will accept as fair criticism when it is justified.

Serving Independent Custody Visitors are eligible to become Police Dog Welfare Visitors.

Disqualifications

Whilst Visitors must be at least 18 years of age, there is no upper age limit.

Persons who have unspent convictions for criminal offences may not be suitable for the role of a Police Dog Welfare Visitor. Relevant factors will include the nature and number of any offences and how long ago they were committed. However, past offending will not be an automatic barrier to acceptance as a Visitor and each case will be considered individually. Having regard to the above, prospective Visitors will be asked to declare any such convictions.

Prospective candidates will also be subject to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exemptions) Order 1975, and as such will not be entitled to withhold information regarding convictions which for other purposes will be 'spent' under the provisions of the Act. Failure to disclose convictions will generally lead to exclusion unless there are exceptional circumstances.

In appointing visitors, it will also be important to avoid any potential conflict of interest. Serving police officers and police staff are unsuitable for that reason, as are special constables and Police Community Support Officers. In accordance with the stated policy of the Council of the Magistrates' Association, Justices of the Peace will not be considered for participation in the Scheme. Persons in these categories who have left or retired from the relevant duties for at least five years may be considered for appointment.

Applications from others involved with the criminal justice system will be considered on an individual basis. For example, solicitors and members of the probation service may find the duties of a visitor conflicting with their professional responsibilities. However, there is no hard and fast rule in such cases and each application will be looked at on its individual merits, having regard to the public service principle of being seen to be independent and impartial.

Staff of the OPCC may not serve as visitors themselves. The essential feature of Police Dog Welfare Visiting is that it draws its volunteers from the community at large, and there is an obvious difficulty with OPCC staff carrying out visits which should be conducted independently and form the basis of reports to them in their formal role.

Visitors must notify the Scheme Administrator of any change in circumstances which will affect their position as a visitor, for example becoming aware that they are subject of a police investigation, after being charged with a criminal offence or a change of employment that might cause a conflict of interest. The Commissioner (or his/her representative) has the power to suspend a visitor until any allegations made against the visitor have been fully investigated by the Police and a decision made whether to charge that individual with a criminal offence.

Tenure

The term of office of Police Dog Welfare Visitors should be three years, subject to a satisfactory six-month probationary period, with an option for renewal for further three-year terms. At the end of the probationary period the Scheme Coordinator will conduct an interview with the probationer on behalf of the Commissioner to assess their ability and willingness to continue as a Volunteer for the Scheme. The Commissioner will expect probationers to have made a minimum of six visits (equating to one per month) during the probationary period; where this has not occurred the Scheme Coordinator will extend the probationary period for a further three months and agree with the Volunteers a minimum number of visits to be made within this extended period.

After a period of three years a full tenure review/renewal will be conducted. The key factors in renewing appointments will be the continuing ability and willingness of the individuals to do the job effectively, and their past performance in the role. The reviewer will make a recommendation and if the recommendation is to renew the appointment, Volunteers will be subject to a renewed Police vetting check in accordance with the Commissioner's vetting policy.

In the event that a Visitor wishes to terminate their appointment before the end of their tenure, they should inform the Scheme Administrator in writing of their intention to resign from the scheme. They must return any paperwork, documentation and their ID badge to the Scheme Administrator. The OPCC may, in its absolute discretion, terminate his or her appointment at any time.

Training

Applicants will be invited to attend information/training sessions organised by the OPCC in consultation with the Chief Constable and the appropriate professional national animal welfare organisations. The training may include such topics as training methods, animal welfare, transportation and health and safety.

The OPCC may also periodically arrange training sessions in response to new training practices and procedures adopted by the police.

Complaint made against a Dog Welfare Visitor

Making a Complaint

A complaint made by any person against a Dog Welfare Visitor (the Visitor) due to the performance of his/her duties should be notified to the Scheme Manager as soon as possible after the alleged misconduct took place.

Criminal Offences

If a complaint made to the Scheme Manager contains an allegation of the commission of a criminal offence by a Visitor whilst carrying out their role, the Scheme Manager will immediately refer the complaint to Derbyshire Police.

The Complaints Procedure will be held in abeyance pending the outcome of any criminal investigation and proceedings in respect of that allegation.

The Complaints Procedure may be proceeded with in respect of any other related allegations that are not alleging a criminal offence.

Criminal Proceedings

Visitors must notify the Scheme Manager if they are charged with a criminal offence. In such circumstances, the Scheme Manager will automatically suspend the Visitor until the outcome of any criminal proceedings is known.

If the Visitor is subsequently found not to be guilty, or if charges are dropped, then consideration will be given to reinstating the Visitor.

Action upon receipt of a Complaint

Upon receipt of a complaint, the Scheme Manager will investigate the allegation by speaking to the parties concerned and seeking to address the complaint informally.

Should the severity of the allegation be significant or form part of a series of complaints relating to the Visitor, a formal process to remove him/her may be invoked.

Complaint made by an Independent Custody Visitor

An Independent Custody Visitor who wishes to make a complaint about their general role and conditions, or any other relevant matter, should notify the Scheme Manager as soon as possible.

Complaints will be investigated by speaking to the parties concerned and seeking to address the complaint informally.

If necessary, depending on the severity or consistency of the complaint, the Scheme Manager will review the circumstances leading to the complaint and consider what, if any, remedial action is required to resolve it.

A complaint about a Derbyshire Police employee must be notified to the Scheme Manager who will seek to resolve the matter in discussion with Derbyshire Police. Should the severity of the allegation be significant, then a referral will be made to the Derbyshire Police Professional Standards department.

A complaint about the Scheme Manager must be notified to the Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer to the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Suspension/Removal of an Independent Custody Visitor

There may be occasions when the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner may need to consider suspending/removing a Visitor from the Scheme, either because of misconduct or unacceptable performance within the role. This may include such matters as:

- being convicted of a criminal offence
- breaching confidentiality
- inappropriate behaviour
- bringing the Scheme into disrepute
- unsatisfactory performance in the role
- falsifying an expense claim

If such an occasion should arise, the Scheme Manager will notify the Visitor concerned of their immediate suspension pending investigation.

The Scheme Manager will notify the circumstances and make a recommendation to the Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer for them to assess and make a determination on removal of the Visitor from the Scheme.

The Scheme Manager will advise the Visitor concerned that their removal from the Scheme is being considered. Details of the grounds for removal will also be given in writing.

The Scheme Manager will notify the Visitor in writing of the decision made by the Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer. A decision to remove the Visitor from the Scheme will take immediate effect.

Right of Appeal against Removal from the Scheme

Should the Visitor concerned be dissatisfied by the decision to remove them from the Scheme, he or she will have the right of appeal to the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The grounds for making the appeal will be made in writing and should be made within 14 calendar days of receiving the letter informing them of their removal.

The Visitor will be informed in writing of the outcome of their appeal.

SECTION 3 - ACCREDITATION AND HANDBOOK

Following notification of their appointment, the OPCC will issue each Visitor with an identity card, signed by the Chief Constable, showing the holder's photograph. The identity card will authorise the holder to enter appropriate police stations and the HQ kennels to undertake a visit in accordance with the scheme. The pass should be worn visibly on the outer clothing when on police premises. Existing Custody Visitors may use their current identity cards.

Visitors' identity cards should be used only for the purpose of making visits. If anyone is found to be using their card for any other purpose, it will be withdrawn and that person's appointment as a Visitor may be terminated.

Visitors must attend a training session, arranged by the OPCC, before being issued with the appropriate accreditation. Training will be provided by Dogs Trust.

Each Visitor will receive a handbook containing details of the operation of the scheme, a list of the police premises subject to the scheme and a list of the names of the other visitors, including contact telephone numbers.

SECTION 4 - FREQUENCY AND CONDUCT OF VISITS

Frequency of Visits

The Scheme Administrator will be responsible for organising Police Dog Welfare visits, and will draw up a rota on a quarterly basis. Police Dog Welfare visitors will be rostered to visit the Derbyshire Police Headquarters Dog Kennels at least once per month. If the Visitor is unable to visit they must report this to the Scheme Administrator, who will make other arrangements.

Access will be granted between the hours of 9.30 am – 7.00 pm and subject to staff being available. Visitors may inspect the conditions in which dogs are kept and will be allowed access to any welfare and training records appertaining to those animals. They may also speak to trainers, trainees, dog handlers, support staff and veterinary surgeons used by the Police Dog Section.

The OPCC may review the frequency of visits from time to time in the light of experience.

Offsite Training

Police Dog Welfare Visitors will also visit 'offsite' training events at least once per year. Such training may involve Visitors walking over farmland and rough fields. The training events will be held around the county in diverse locations and it will be the responsibility of the Scheme Administrator to roster visitors to attend those off-site training events to check on the welfare of the dogs.

Confidentiality

During the course of their duties, Police Dog Welfare Visitors may acquire confidential information about police issues, and visitors are therefore asked to maintain confidentiality. Visitors should be aware that the improper disclosure of information acquired during a visit might attract civil or criminal proceedings. It is stressed that confidential information must not be included in the written reports to the OPCC of the results of the visits.

Should a Police Dog Welfare Visitor receive information or a complaint in confidence regarding the welfare of a particular dog, this information should be forwarded immediately to the Scheme Administrator who will inform the RSPCA. The RSPCA will then investigate any allegation made in the normal way.

Other Visitors names, addresses or telephone numbers are given to individual visitors in the strictest confidence, and are given to other visitors purely for convenience in making personal contact. Such details should not be divulged to any other person.

Conduct of Visits

When conducting a visit the Police Dog Welfare Visitors will, at all times, be accompanied by a dog handler or by a member of staff at the HQ Dog Kennels. Visitors **must** adhere to advice given by dog handlers or members of staff of the HQ Dog Kennels with regard to any health and safety issues. Visitors will not normally be entitled to visit officer's private residences to inspect kennel facilities, but in exceptional circumstances a visitor may be asked to accompany a police officer to a dog handler's home. However, the visitors may wish to bring to the attention of the Officer in Charge of the Police Dog Section any concerns they may have regarding a particular animal and that Officer will then take the appropriate action in relation to inspecting kennels maintained at a dog handler's home.

Following consultation with that visitor the Officer in Charge will submit a full report to the OPCC.

If, when attending the kennels, the visitor cannot gain access via the front door **under no circumstances** should they attempt to gain access via the rear door; this may lead to serious injury as the dogs are very protective of the kennel staff and will only follow commands given by their handlers. Furthermore no visitor should enter the premises alone due to the nature of the dog sections operational role within the force.

All visits carried out by Police Dog Welfare Visitors must meet the accepted standards endorsed by the RSPCA, Dogs Trust, the Commissioner and Derbyshire Constabulary.

Should a Police Dog Welfare Visitor have concerns regarding the identity of a particular dog, the Officer in Charge of the Dog Section will identify the particular dog for the Visitor.

Visits at the Request of the Police

Exceptionally, circumstances may arise where the police will wish to initiate a visit by a Police Dog Welfare visitor. This may include a visit to a dog handler's home address, in particular where there may be serious local concern about the treatment and well-being of police dogs, and that a special visit could help allay public fears. The Officer in Charge of the Dog Section will be responsible on these occasions for contacting an appropriate visitor and arranging a visit. Equally, if a specific complaint is received by the Police pertaining to animal welfare, the officer tasked with investigating the initial complaint should consider involving visitors qualified in animal welfare. This would include allegations in relation to an officer's home address.

SECTION 5 - COMPLETION OF REPORTS AND FOLLOW UP ACTION

Completion of Reports

Visitors should make notes during the course of their visit using the Aide-memoire (see copy attached). At the conclusion of each visit, the Police Dog Welfare Visitor must complete an electronic form using the information obtained from the visit at home. Details recorded should include both specific matters (which may have already been brought to the attention of the Kennel Staff) and more general issues relating to the Kennel conditions or procedures. The report should be sent, as soon as possible, to the Scheme Coordinator at the OPCC using Microsoft Forms.

Reports on Issues Arising out of Visits

The Scheme Administrator will arrange regular meetings of Visitors which will allow the discussion of visiting arrangements and the distribution of visitors' reports. Any concerns may be brought to the attention of the Officer in Charge.

Issues arising out of visits will also be submitted to the Commissioner and the Chief Constable of the Derbyshire Constabulary.

Expenses

Visitors will be reimbursed their legitimate expenses incurred when carrying out visits, including public transport fares, taxi fares and car parking. A travel allowance is payable for visitors who use a motor vehicle, as follows:-

Payable at Police Negotiating Board rates – see Scheme Administrator for current rates.

1. Claim forms must be completed and returned to the Scheme Administrator for processing each quarter.
2. Visitors claiming public transport/taxi fares, car parking charges etc, must ensure that they attach relevant receipts to their claim form. Failure to do so will result in the claim being denied.
3. When visitors are attending events which require travel and/or accommodation it is the Scheme Coordinators responsibility to book and pay for the bookings. If the volunteer attending the event does not require travel and/or accommodation this needs to be discussed with the Scheme Coordinator prior to any bookings being made. This is to ensure that the best price is secured for travel expenses and accommodation. No ad-hoc travel expenses or accommodation will be paid without prior agreement by the Scheme Coordinator.

Note:

It is recommended that the person driving the motor vehicle on visiting duties should first check with their vehicle insurance provider that their insurance policy covers this type of voluntary activity.

Insurance

The Commissioner is to arrange appropriate insurance for Visitors.

All Police Dog Welfare Visitors will receive information and advice on Generic Risk Assessments carried out by the Derbyshire Constabulary.

Publicity Guidelines

It is generally desirable that the role and aims of the scheme should be promoted to the public. Visitors must, however, bear in mind that the purpose of publicity is to inform the public about the scheme and not draw attention to individual cases or to themselves.

Any invitation to speak to the press or local groups or organisations about any aspect of visiting should be referred to the Commissioner, and should not be undertaken by individual visitors, except at the request of the Commissioner, who will in normal circumstances have consulted with the Chief Constable.

Visitors should remember that they are accountable to the Commissioner, and not to the press or individual members of the public.