



Police & Crime
Commissioner
for Cheshire

SWYDDFA COMISIYNYDD HEDDLU
A THROSEDD GOGLEDD CYMRU



OFFICE OF THE POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER NORTH WALES

Cheshire & North Wales Police Dog Welfare Scheme

Annual Report 2022/23



Introduction

1. In 1997, the death of police dog ‘Acer’ whilst training in Essex, as well as the subsequent prosecution of police officers involved, resulted in an understandable loss of public confidence in relation to police dog training methods. A subsequent review of all police dog training methods and handling launched by the Association of Chief Police Officers led to the introduction of Animal Welfare Lay Visitors Schemes.
2. The Scheme with Cheshire was established in 2002 but following the amalgamation of the Cheshire and North Wales Police Dog Units in 2016, forming the Alliance Policing Dog Section, the Scheme is now a joint Cheshire and North Wales Police Dog Welfare Scheme. The Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner (OPCC) within Cheshire monitors the operation of the Scheme on behalf of both Commissioners with support from the team in North Wales.
3. Police dogs within Cheshire and North Wales vary in sex, age and breed. The alliance has a mix of tactical/general purpose police dogs, dedicated specialist search dogs.
4. The strategic aim of the Scheme is to maintain public confidence and safeguard the welfare of all police dogs by ensuring that police dog training methods and the operational use of police dogs are ethical, humane, transparent and accountable.



The Scheme operates alongside the annual inspection of all dogs undertaken by a Veterinary Surgeon and the inspection of the kennels located at the handler’s home by the Police Dogs Unit Sergeant.

Annual Report 2022/23

5. This Annual Report captures details of the work of the Cheshire & North Wales Police Dog Welfare Scheme from 01 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 and includes information in relation to visits undertaken throughout the year.

Operation of the Scheme

6. Police Dog Welfare Visitors are exclusively members of the local community, who volunteer to observe, comment and report on the conditions in which the Constabulary's dogs are housed, trained and transported whilst on duty. In order to maintain the scheme's independence and avoid any conflict of interest, all visitors have no direct involvement with Cheshire or North Wales Police Forces including being serving or retired Police Officers, member of police staff, Community Support Officers, Special Constable or Magistrate.
7. Visitors carry out an inspection of all police dogs within the Dog Unit which has a mix of General Purpose Police Dogs which are deployed for searching, tracking, arrest work and crowd control. A number of these dogs are trained to work with firearms officers. The Dog Unit also have dogs that specialise in detecting drugs, cash, guns, weapons, explosives and seminal fluids.
8. The visitors ensure compliance with the RSPCA's 'Five Freedoms' or 'Five Needs' on which the Animal Welfare Act 2006 is based, and a report is completed for each dog observed. The visitors also take account of the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs 'Code of Practice' (2017) categorisations when visiting the kennels (Appendix 1). Any issues or concerns raised by the visitors are brought to the attention of the Dogs Unit Supervisor via the Commissioners' offices. The Scheme Administrator is kept informed of any action taken to resolve issues or concerns that have been raised.
9. The RSPCA 'Five Freedoms/needs' include:
 - (1) Freedom from hunger and thirst - by providing ready access to fresh water and a balanced diet that maintains health and vigour.
 - (2) Freedom from pain, injury and disease - by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
 - (3) Freedom from fear and distress - by ensuring conditions and treatment, which avoid mental suffering.
 - (4) Freedom from discomfort - by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting and sleeping area; and
 - (5) Freedom to express normal behaviour - by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and appropriate company of the animals' own kind.

.....

10. Police Dog Welfare Visitors undertake impromptu visits on a monthly basis to:

- Attend programmed training days for police dogs and handlers held at various venues throughout Cheshire and North Wales.
- Inspect Police kennels; and
- Inspect police vehicles used to transport police dogs to ensure they are fit for purpose.



11. At the visits, the Dog Welfare Visitors record all observations, comments and any concerns relating to the welfare needs on a report form. The completed report is sent to the Scheme Administrator who reviews and records all comments made. Should any concerns be raised by the visitors regarding the welfare of the police dogs, the Scheme Administrator will raise this with the Dog Unit Sergeant and any action taken to resolve the concerns raised will be recorded. All information noted on the report form or gathered at the visits is confidential.

12. As of 31 March 2023, the Cheshire and North Wales Police Dog Welfare Scheme had three Police Dog Welfare Visitors (located within Cheshire).

Visiting Data

13. Data from 01 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 indicates that a total of 20 visits were completed throughout Cheshire and North Wales (comprising of training days and visits to the kennels), with 60 different dogs being observed during the year. On some visits, multiple dogs were observed, and some dogs were seen more than once throughout the year. On all visits, a total of 143 dogs were observed and checked by the volunteers.
14. In addition to kennels and training facilities, the operational vehicles were checked and reported to be in good condition.

Issues Raised

15. Throughout 2021/22, through their feedback Police Dog Welfare Visitors raised several problematic issues in relation to estates and facilities, in particular about muddy conditions at the kennels (Winsford). To resolve this issue hard standing areas have been placed in each of the outside pens.

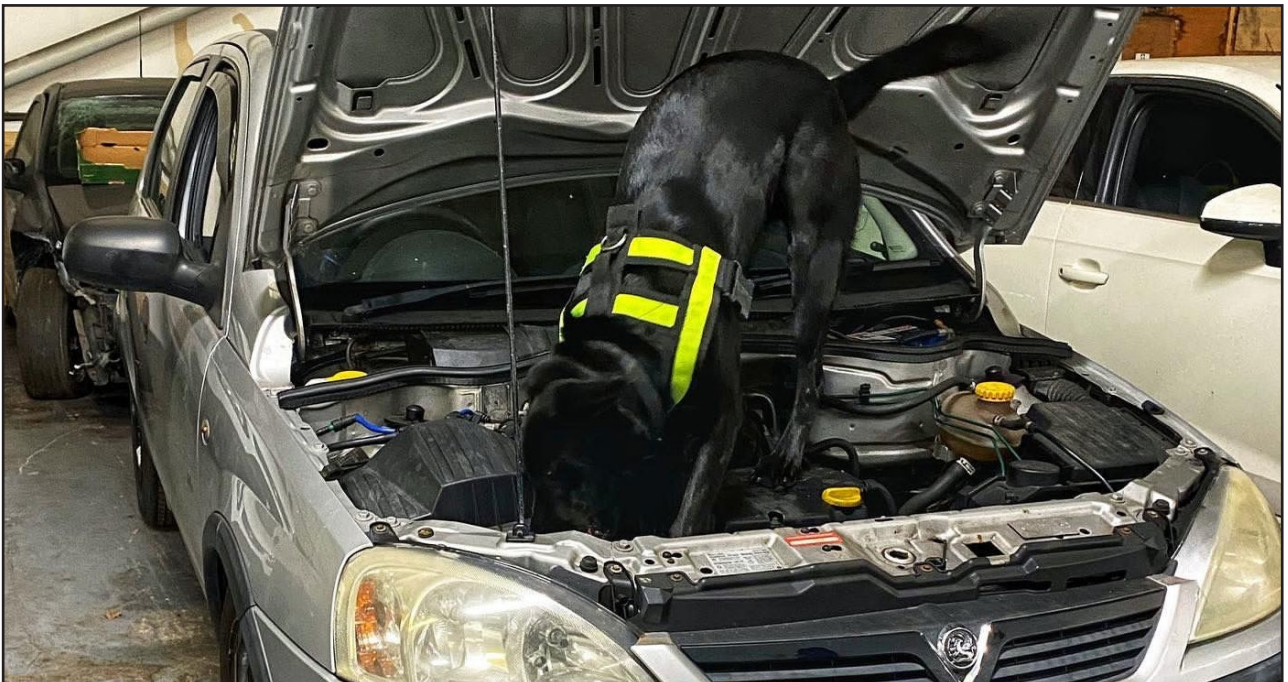


-
-
- 16.** In addition to feedback suggesting what should be improved, Police Dog Welfare Visitors in their observations also noted positive feedback regarding the levels of care given to the dogs. Moreover, complimentary comments about the kennel staff praised them for their knowledge of the dogs and for the high standards of cleanliness at the kennels.
 - 17.** No complaints have been received regarding the welfare of a particular dog during the reporting period. Should one of the independent visitors 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 arrange for the matter to be investigated.

Training & Development

.....

- 18.** Police Dog Welfare Volunteers attend Police Dog Welfare Scheme meetings to discuss emerging issues from visits and any training needs.



Police Dog Welfare Volunteers receive training on their recruitment from the Dogs Trust and any ongoing training provided in-house by the Dog Section and external training from the Dogs Trust (e.g. behaviour conference).

Contact

- 19.** For further information in relation to the Police Dog Welfare Visitors scheme, please contact:

Karolina Kardas (Scheme Administrator)

Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner,
Police Headquarters, Clemonds Hey,
Oakmere Road, Winsford, Cheshire,
CW7 2UA

E-mail: **pcc@cheshire.police.uk**

Tel: **01606 364000**

Angharad Jones (Scheme Administrator)

Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner,
Police Headquarters, Glan y Don,
Colwyn Bay, Conwy, LL29 8AW

E-mail: **opcc@northwales.police.uk**

Tel: **01492 805486**

Appendix 1: Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs 'Code of Practice' (2017) categorisations

a) Need for a suitable environment

- Provide dogs with safe, clean environments with adequate hazard protection.
- Provide dogs with a comfortable, clean, dry, quiet, draught-free rest area, somewhere to go when frightened and access to an appropriate toilet area, away from its rest area, to use as frequently as needed.
- Ensure that any place in which dogs are left is large enough to provide, at all times, a comfortable area with effective ventilation and temperature control, and that the dogs are able to move around to ensure comfort, avoiding becoming too hot or too cold.
- When transporting dogs, ensure they are comfortable and safe at all times.
- Do not leave dogs unattended in any situation, or for any period of time which is likely to cause them distress.

b) Need for a suitable diet

- Provide dogs with clean, fresh drinking water at all times, carrying it with you if it is unlikely to be available.
- Dogs should be able to reach food and water easily in all situations.
- Provide dogs with balanced diets that meet their individual requirements or special feeding needs, and ensure they maintain a stable, healthy weight.
- Be aware of any changes in the amount dogs eat or drink, as potential signs of ill health.
- Dogs should not be fed shortly before, or after, strenuous exercise.

c) Need to be housed with, or apart from, other animals

- Make sure that dogs have opportunities to socialise with people and friendly dogs, not being left alone long enough to become distressed.
- If dogs are fearful of, or aggressive towards, other dogs, or distressed or frightened by social encounters, avoid these situations and seek advice.
- Handle dogs properly, and ensure they are not stressed or endangered by other people or animals or leave them unsupervised with animals or people who may harm or frighten them.
- Be consistent in the way you and those around you react to dogs.

d) Need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns

- Make sure that dogs have enough to do so they do not become distressed or bored through access to safe toys and suitable objects to play with and chew.
- Ensure dogs can rest undisturbed when they want to.
- Provide dogs with regular opportunities for exercise and play.
- Know the behaviour of dogs when they are fit and healthy. If you become aware of changes in behaviour, seek veterinary advice as the dog may be distressed, bored, ill or injured.
- Use positive reward-based training and avoid harsh, potentially painful or frightening training methods.

e) Need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

- Take precautions to keep dogs safe from injury, check them regularly and watch for signs of injury, disease or illness, or changes in behaviour.
- Check dogs' coats regularly, and groom dogs if necessary.
- If dogs are kept outside, clean up regularly to avoid disease transmission.
- It is important dogs are only given medicines authorised for dogs or that have been specifically prescribed or advised by your vet for a dog.
- Dogs are required to wear a collar and identity tag when in public. Collars should be of the correct size and fit, not causing any pain or discomfort.
- Microchip databases should be kept up to date with any changes in the contact details of a dog's registered keeper.



Police & Crime
Commissioner
for Cheshire

SWYDDFA COMISIYNYDD HEDDLU
A THROSEDD GOGLEDD CYMRU



OFFICE OF THE **POLICE & CRIME**
COMMISSIONER NORTH WALES