



Independent Dog Welfare Lay Visitors Scheme Annual Report

2018-2019



— **David Lloyd** —
**Police and Crime
Commissioner**
for Hertfordshire

Police and Crime Commissioner's Foreword

The Independent Dog Welfare Lay Visitors Scheme has continued to provide essential and robust public scrutiny of the care and treatment of dogs in Hertfordshire, ensuring that it is humane, ethical and in accordance with the Animal Welfare Act 2006. The volunteers provide an important independent role that assists me in holding the Chief Constable to account for the discharge of his functions and those of the officers and staff under his direction and control.

The lessons learnt from the death of a police dog in Essex in 1997 highlighted the need for a transparent and accountable scheme to provide public confidence in the way police animals are trained and cared for. I am pleased that across Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire we have a scheme in place that gives us all confidence that this important function is carried out.

The report highlights the findings from the independent visitors over the last 12 months. I am pleased that no serious concerns were raised by the volunteers over this period and that the volunteers found the dogs to be in good condition. I would like to thank all the volunteers for their dedication and commitment to the scheme throughout 2018/19.



David Lloyd
Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire

Comments from the Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire (BCH) Dog Unit



The scheme continues to be a success and well supported showing its importance in maintaining high standards of welfare for our service dogs. Our thanks go to the volunteers who give up their time to contribute to ensuring the scheme remains independent and legitimate through their scrutiny.

Sergeant Mike Wood,
Hertfordshire Constabulary

Background of the scheme

The Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire (BCH) Independent Dog Welfare Visiting scheme was established in 2012 and has taken several forms since then. Animal Welfare Lay Visiting Schemes came into existence following the death of a police dog in Essex during training in 1997, which led to a loss of public confidence. Following a review into the training and handling launched by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) Police Dog Sub-Committee, Animal Welfare Lay Visiting Schemes came into existence.

A Lay Visiting Scheme has been in place in Hertfordshire since 2006, and collaborated with Bedfordshire in 2009. Luton International Airport (LIA) became involved in the scheme in 2011. In 2012, the Independent Dog Welfare Lay Visiting Scheme and shortly after, Cambridgeshire joined the scheme.



Overview of the Scheme

Independent Dog Welfare Visitors are independent members of the public who observe, comment and report on the condition of the police dogs and their means of transportation whilst on duty. In order to maintain the scheme's independence and avoid any conflict of interest, all visitors have to ensure they do not have any direct involvement with Hertfordshire Constabulary including being a serving police or retired police officer, a member of police staff, Police Community Support Officer, Special Constable or Magistrate.

The visitors carry out an inspection on all police dogs within the Dog Unit which have 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. Both the Dog Unit and LIA Team have dogs who specialise in detecting drugs, cash, guns, weapons, and explosives.

The aim of the scheme is to inspect each police dog at least once every six months. Due to the organisation of the Dog Unit, these visits tend to be on a ten week rotation. Should a police dog miss a scheduled visit, a special visit is arranged to maintain regular inspections.

Recruitment of the Independent Dog Welfare Visitors

As of 1st April 2018 the joint Independent Dog Welfare Visiting Scheme had six active Dog Welfare Visitors covering visits across Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire. One visitor is from Bedfordshire, one from Cambridgeshire and four from Hertfordshire.

Independent Dog Welfare Visitors remain committed to the scheme with four volunteers having in excess of four years, with an additional two Dog Welfare visitors having completed one years' service following completion of training in April 2018.



Newly appointed visitors are required to attend a training session with input from the Dogs Trust before undertaking any visits and complete a six month probation period.

If you are interested in becoming an Independent Dog Welfare Visitor, please follow the link to learn more about the scheme and get in contact with the scheme administrator: <http://hertscommissioner.org/dogs>

Visiting Procedure

Visits are arranged at an agreed police training location on any given date and time with the Dog Unit/LIA representative and the scheme administrator in the Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner's Office. The visitor is informed of which dogs are available to be seen during each visit and provided access to the previous visits' comments by the scheme administrator. Every dog is visited in the year.

At the visits, the Dog Welfare Visitor will record all observations and raise any concerns on a report form. The report form is based on the Code of Practice (2017) published by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and complies with the latest standards. Visitors monitor the welfare of the police dogs against the following:

- a) Need for a suitable environment,
- b) Need for a suitable diet,
- c) Need to be housed with, or apart from, other animals,
- d) Need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns, and
- e) Need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

All completed report forms are sent to the scheme administrator for monitoring. Should any concerns be raised by the visitors regarding the welfare of the police dogs, the scheme administrator raise it with the Dog Unit or LIA Team. Any action taken to resolve the concerns raised is recorded by the scheme manager. All information noted on the report form or gathered at the visits is confidential. In the period of this Annual Report no serious concerns were noted.



PD Buzz

Panel Meetings

Bi-annual Panel Meetings are held with representatives from the BCH Dog Unit, LIA Team and Commissioner's office to keep the volunteers informed of any changes to legislation and updates within the Dog Units.

Annual Review

Between 1st April 2018 and 31st March 2019, Dog Welfare Visitors completed 44 visits, resulting in 214 dog checks across the three counties. On average, four visits are undertaken each month by the visitors. In comparison with last year, 36 visits were undertaken and 217 police dogs seen. Operational requirements prevented some police dogs and handlers from being available at the pre-planned scheduled time of visits, resulting in more spontaneous visits being undertaken by the volunteers.

Key Findings

The volunteers monitor the conditions of the kennels and the means of transportation on duty. No serious concerns were made by the volunteers. However, slight issues were raised regarding chewed matting in the vehicles. To address this concern additional matting has been purchased by Hertfordshire Constabulary which is available to the dog handlers at their force Headquarters as a replacement when needed. Chewing of matting enables the dogs to demonstrate natural behaviour as outlined by the DEFRA principles. Positive comments were recorded in relation to the cleanliness of cages, availability of water and availability of first aid kits.



PD Mia

The visitors often commented on the healthy weight of the police dogs, how well the dogs moved and the good condition of their coats. Those police dogs that had received treatment following an injury and were in recovery were also inspected by the visitors. During this year, the Dog Unit negotiated a contract with physiotherapy specialists to ensure the best treatment available to police dogs should it be needed. The visitors commented positively on the timeliness of vaccinations and medication being given. Further comments were also made regarding the clear and obvious good relationships between the police dogs and their handlers.

Dog Welfare Updates

Armour

Hertfordshire Police Dog (PD) Finn sustained near-fatal injuries during an operation in Stevenage in October 2016 when apprehending an armed suspect. As a result, the BCH Dog Unit investigated what protection could be provided for the police dogs whilst on duty. New Zealand Police Force are currently using body armour for the police dogs which has proved effective. The armour would provide additional protection to the dogs' vital organs between the chest and rib cage. The Dog Unit purchased six pieces of armour and conducted a six month trial, with handlers providing positive feedback. At the end of the trial period, the police dogs were assessed completing exercises both wearing and not wearing the armour by vets and physiotherapists. No final conclusion was reached at the time of completing the trial so the six pieces of armour have been supplied to some of the dogs who assist firearms officers, and will be reviewed after a two year period.

Finn's Law

During the operation in October 2016, PD Finn who received two stab wounds, causing serious injuries, maintained a firm grip on the suspect and provided essential protection for his handler, PC Dave Wardell, who sustained a stab wound to the hand. The offender was charged with Actual Bodily Harm in relation to the wound to PC Wardell and faced criminal damage charges over the injuries to Finn.

PC Wardell has been campaigning 'Finn's Law' which will provide increased protection for service animals and prevent suspects claiming self-defence. The Animal Welfare (Service Animals) Act, also known as Finn's Law, has now received Royal Assent and will become law as of June 2019.



Retired PD Finn

Agility and Sensory Suite



This year, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire through his Efficiency and Innovation Fund awarded the Dogs Unit £15,000 to purchase the latest dog agility equipment and a scent identification suite to aid effective training. The scent identification suite includes a wall containing multiples holes to hide drugs and other substances to train the dogs on the different scents.

