

Annual Report 2017-18



Independent Dog Welfare Visiting Scheme



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

Background of the Scheme

The death of a police dog in Essex during training in 1997 and the loss of public confidence that followed as a result, led to a review of all police dog training methods and handling launched by the Association of Chief Police Officers' (ACPO)¹ Police Dog Sub-Committee. From this review came the introduction of Animal Welfare Lay Visitors Schemes. This has taken several forms in Hertfordshire since 2006, including collaboration

with neighbouring Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire. The joint Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Independent Dog Welfare Visiting Scheme (BCH) was established in December 2012, and is the responsibility of the three Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs). It is administered on behalf of all PCCs by the PCC's office in Hertfordshire.

Overview of the Scheme



Dog Welfare Visitors are independent members of the public who volunteer their time to undertake visits to police dogs within the collaborated BCH Dog Unit, as well as police

dogs working at Luton International Airport (LIA). Police dogs vary in sex, age and breed. The Dog Unit has a mix of General Purpose Police Dogs, as well as specialist dogs for identifying drugs, cash, guns, explosives and weapons. Visitors observe, comment and report on the welfare of all police dogs and their means of transportation whilst on duty. Based on feedback from the Dog Welfare Visitors, the Commissioner's office for Hertfordshire is able to address any concerns with the BCH Dog Unit and LIA team.

The aim of the scheme is to inspect each police dog at least once in a six month period, however, this tends to be on a ten week rotation due to the organisation of the police dogs and their handlers. Should a police dog miss its scheduled visit due to handler circumstances, a special visit will be arranged to maintain regular inspections.

¹ The Association of Chief Police Officers has since been replaced by the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC).

The Independent Dog Welfare Visitors and Recruitment

This year, Independent Dog Welfare Visits have been undertaken by four volunteers. These volunteers have shown great commitment to the scheme, with one volunteer giving six years' service, another five years' service and two volunteers giving three years' service. Two visitors are from Hertfordshire, one is from Cambridgeshire and one from Bedfordshire.

The three PCC offices undertook recruitment in 2017/18 to increase the number of Independent

Visiting Procedure

Welfare visits are arranged between the Dog Unit/LIA team and the Scheme Administrators in the Commissioner's office for Hertfordshire. Visits can take place at any given day or time at one of the three police force Headquarters sites or other external training location. Before each visit, the Dog Welfare Visitor undertaking the visit is advised of which dogs are available, so that they can view each dog's previous visit information.

At each visit, the Dog Welfare Visitor will note observations, comments and concerns on a report form. The scheme monitors the Dog Unit and LIA teams' compliance with the RSPCA's 'Five Freedoms' on which the Animal Welfare Act 2006 is based:

1. **Freedom from hunger and thirst**
2. **Freedom from discomfort**
3. **Freedom from pain, injury and disease**
4. **Freedom to express normal behaviour**
5. **Freedom from fear and distress**

Dog Welfare Visitors. Four volunteers were appointed, three from Hertfordshire and one from Bedfordshire. No applications were received from Cambridgeshire this year.

All newly appointed Dog Welfare Visitors are required to attend a training session with input from the Dogs Trust before undertaking any visits. This is followed by a six month probationary period.



Police Dog PD Jackson

For the coming year 2018/19, Dog Welfare Visitors will be monitoring the welfare of police dogs visited against the new Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs' updated 'Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs' which was published in December 2017². The following needs are set out:

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



PD Dexter



Police Handler with PD Luna

The new and existing volunteers have all received training on the Code of Practice.

All report forms are sent to the Scheme Administrators for logging. Should the volunteers raise any concerns in relation to the welfare of the dog visited, the Scheme Administrators will raise this with the Dog Unit or LIA team. The Scheme Administrators are kept informed of any action taken to resolve concerns that have raised. All information gathered at a visit is confidential.

² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/697953/pb13333-cop-dogs-091204.pdf

Annual Review

Between 1st April 2017 and 31st March 2018, volunteers completed 36 visits across the three counties, resulting in 217 dog checks.

Comments:

Additional comments noted by the Visitors indicated that vaccinations and medication for the dogs were up to date. It was also noted that dogs looked and moved well and had good relationships with their handlers, cages were clean and water and first aid kits available. Other comments noted the recovery of dogs following treatment.

Concerns:

- One volunteer highlighted a concern in relation to the blackout material used on some dog transportation vehicles at LIA, and whether this had any effect on the dogs whilst in the

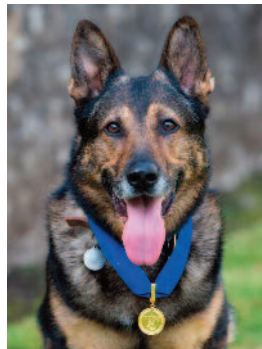
vehicles when parked in the sun. Both the LIA team Sergeant and the BCH Dog Unit Sergeant were immediately notified. The LIA team Sergeant confirmed rear doors had been left open to allow the dogs some fresh air whilst in the vehicles, and vans were parked in the sunlight for a brief amount of time. Window reflectors were replaced as a precaution and the supplier was notified of the issue.

- Visitors commented on the condition of the matting in the vehicle cages and the bending of the partition between cages on a couple of occasions. These were addressed by the Constabulary staff who inspect and maintain the vehicles, and additional matting was also made available to the dog handlers themselves at the force Headquarters for replacement as needed.

Dog Welfare Updates

Award winning PD Finn

Hertfordshire Police Dog (PD), Finn, who sustained near-fatal injuries when apprehending an armed suspect during an operation in Stevenage in October 2016, will soon be receiving the PDSA Gold Medal (the animals' George Cross) for his bravery and devotion. Despite receiving two stab wounds, PD Finn was able to keep a firm grip on the suspect he and PC Dave Wardell were detaining, providing vital protection for his handler. PC Wardell sustained a stab wound to the hand, however felt his injury was greatly minimised thanks to PD Finn. The police dog was back on duty 11 weeks later, but now enjoys his retirement at home with PC Wardell. PD Finn was formally presented with his medal on Sunday 6th May at the PDSA's 'PetLife Festival' 2018 at Cheltenham Racecourse, the first ever public presentation of



the award.

Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Dog Unit Puppy Fostering Scheme

This year has seen the arrival of several young German Shepherd puppies, who will be joining the BCH Dog Unit when they are old enough to begin their initial police dog training. In the meantime, a unique opportunity has been provided for members of the public to voluntarily foster these dogs before they are assigned to a handler. The puppy fosterers have been teaching some initial life skills, with additional enhancement from police dog instructors. Once with the BCH Dog Unit, these young dogs will also receive a welfare visit from the Independent Dog Welfare Visitors.



Feedback on the Independent Dog Welfare Visiting Scheme

Comments from Police and Crime Commissioners



“It is very apparent that there is a genuine love for our police dogs, who play a vital role in supporting officers operationally across the three counties. It is important that these dogs receive good care and are kept in appropriate

conditions, in order to be able to perform to the best of their abilities whilst on duty. Dog Welfare Visitors undertake independent checks on all dogs to ensure that this is the case, and therefore increase the trust and confidence the public have in their police force. I would like to thank our four experienced volunteers for their dedicated service over the years, as well as offer a warm welcome to our new volunteers joining the scheme in the next year”.

David Lloyd, PCC for Hertfordshire



“Dog Welfare Visitors are essential in terms of both the feedback they give to the handlers in the tri-force Dog Unit and the reassurance they give the public that these superb working animals are properly looked after. They

check that they have appropriate kennelling, access to water and food and that the vehicles in which they are transported have adequate ventilation on even the hottest days. The outpouring of public support for the tri-force police dog Finn, when he was stabbed by a criminal during a pursuit, shows that the public are hugely interested in the welfare of police dogs and need to know that we are looking after them as they spend their working lives trying to protect us all”.

Kathryn Holloway, PCC for Bedfordshire



Comments from the BCH Dog Unit

“The volunteer scheme shows Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire are committed to providing our service animals with the highest standards of welfare. To that effect we are open and transparent, and we welcome the lay visitor scheme as an important and independent body to scrutinise our standards”.

Sergeant Mike Wood

Contacts

Independent Dog Welfare Visiting Scheme
Administrator
Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
15 Vaughan Road, Harpenden, Hertfordshire,
AL5 4GZ
Telephone: 01707 806100
Email: pccadmin@herts.pnn.gov.uk

For more information regarding the role of the Joint Independent Dog Welfare Visiting Scheme and that of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, visit:
www.hertscommissioner.org

