



David Keane
Police & Crime
Commissioner
for Cheshire



Cheshire & North Wales Police Dog Welfare Scheme

Annual Report 2017/18

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 the both Commissioners.
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, as well as specialist dogs for identifying drugs, cash, guns, explosives and weapons.
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 supervisor.

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5. This Annual Report captures details of the work of the Cheshire & North Wales Police Dog Welfare Scheme from 01 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 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. The visitors ensure compliance with the RSPCA's 'Five Freedoms' on which the Animal Welfare Act 2006 is based and a report is completed for each dog observed. Any issues or concerns raised by the visitors are brought to the attention of the Dogs Unit Supervisor via the Commissioners' offices. The Scheme Administrators is kept informed of any action taken to resolve issues or concerns that have raised.
7. The RSPCA 'Five Freedoms' 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.
8. 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 the kennels located at Cheshire Constabulary's Dogs Unit located at Lane End Farm, Winsford; and
 - Inspect police vehicles used to transport police dogs to ensure they are fit for purpose.

9. As of 31 March 2018, the Cheshire and North Wales Police Dog Welfare Scheme had four Police Dog Welfare Visitors (two located within Cheshire and two located within North Wales).

Visiting Data

10. Data from 01 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 indicates that a total of 20 visits were completed throughout Cheshire and North Wales (7 training days and 13 visits to the kennels), with 54 dogs observed.

Issues Raised

11. Throughout 2017/18, Police Dog Welfare Visitors raised issues in relation to difficulties keeping dogs clean during bad weather, floor drainage requiring levelling due to water pooling at the kennels (Winsford) and occasions when dogs are being housed in handlers' own vehicles due to police vans being out of use.
12. In addition, however, Police Dog Welfare Visitors continue to provide positive comments in relation to the welfare, health and wellbeing of dogs within Cheshire and North Wales. Complimentary comments about dog handlers were also received and visits to the kennels located in Winsford reported continued high standards of cleanliness.

Training & Development

13. Police Dog Welfare Volunteers attend an annual Police Dog Welfare Scheme meeting to discuss emerging issues from visits and any training needs. Police Dog Welfare Volunteers are also encouraged to inform the Scheme Administrator of any areas of training which they consider would be beneficial, as and when they arise.

Contact

14. For further information in relation to the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme, please contact:

Matt Walton (Scheme Administrator)

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Cheshire Constabulary Management Response

15. The Constabulary note the positive comments in relation to the overall welfare, health and wellbeing of the dogs across the Alliance and specifically in Cheshire. It welcomes the scrutiny and thanks the volunteers for their ongoing commitment and the wider interest they have shown in attending the training sessions to understand how the wider welfare of the dogs is considered.
16. The issue with the kennel floor has been resolved by Estates and the issue regarding the police vehicles being off the road occurred in January / February, which was due to a combination of reasons, relating to electrical faults, tyre replacement and regular servicing of the vehicles.