

The **Animal Welfare** **Independent Visitors** **Scheme**



In partnership with



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NPCC's Foreword



I'm delighted to have recently been selected as the National Police Chiefs Council lead for Police Dogs and believe the work of our brave service animals offers a genuine opportunity to drive public confidence in policing. Alongside wanting to celebrate the incredible work of our world class police dogs, I am equally keen to progress welfare considerations to ensure they receive the care, respect and loving care they rightly deserve.

Independent scrutiny to provide public reassurance is something all police forces have benefitted from and our partnership with the Dogs Trust and the Animal Welfare Independent visitors who give up their time voluntarily is critical to the success of this scheme. I'm also grateful to Police (Fire) and Crime Commissioners for their support for the scheme and for their help in selecting and appointing the Independent Visitors.

I look forward to working with the Dogs Trust in their vital role over the coming months and years.

Pippa Mills

Deputy Chief Constable Pippa Mills
National Police Chiefs Council Lead for Police Dogs

Introduction

The death of Acer, a police dog in 1997, and the subsequent prosecution of police officers, resulted in a loss of public confidence in police dog training methods. The incident generated adverse comments in the media and caused several animal welfare organisations – including Dogs Trust, to stop rehoming dogs to the police.

In response to these issues, a sub-committee of the National Police Chief's Council, (formerly known as the Association of Chief Police Officers, or ACPO) embarked upon a thorough review of police dog training. The team developed a strategy aimed at restoring public confidence by ensuring that training methods are humane, ethical and transparent. The strategy focuses on six key areas, including the welfare and treatment of dogs, alongside raising awareness amongst the public of the work of police dogs. The use of items such as barbed 'Pinch Collars' and electric collars, which were used to punish dogs was banned at the time of the ACPO review.

The training and welfare of dogs engaged in police work must be open and be seen to be open. To this end, the Animal Welfare Independent Visitors Scheme was successfully piloted by Lancashire Police force and then rolled out across other forces.

In 2006, the Animal Welfare Act brought in an even greater responsibility for police forces to provide for the needs of the dogs in their care. The Animal Welfare Act 2006 applied to England and Wales. For forces operating in Northern Ireland, the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) is applicable; and for forces in Scotland, the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006, applies.

This booklet sets out how the scheme operates and the animal welfare principles that apply to police forces. It is aimed at police forces and people interested in becoming animal welfare independent visitors and is expanded on in the Animal welfare independent visitor training provide by Dogs Trust. Police forces can also access further explanation and guidance from Dogs Trust.



Who are Animal Welfare Independent Visitors?

Animal Welfare Independent Visitors come from a variety of backgrounds and sections of the local community. They are tasked with checking on the welfare of police dogs within police dog training centres, police station, central kennel facilities and other venues. Their visits may be pre-arranged or unannounced and they may be accompanied by professionals from animal welfare organisations To prevent possible conflicts of interest, and to maintain the scheme's impartiality, Independent Visitors do not have any direct or indirect involvement with the criminal justice system.

Role of animal welfare organisations

Since its inception, Dogs Trust has supported Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners to set up and run the Animal Welfare Independent Visitors Scheme for their force, through the provision of information, meetings and training for both police officers and Independent Visitors.

Dogs Trust ensures that the scheme is running in accordance with the guidelines set out in this booklet and awards those who are complying with the scheme with a certificate of compliance.

Only those forces that are members of the Animal Welfare Independent Visitors Scheme are allowed to adopt or rehome dogs from Dogs Trust.

All forces are encouraged to engage with a professional animal welfare organisation to act as a consulting body, and if necessary as an Independent Visitor.

Only welfare organisations which are members of the Association of Dog and Cat Homes (ADCH) are to be used.

Details can be found at www.adch.org.uk

Animal welfare standards

The Animal Welfare Independent Visitors will inspect the training, housing and transport of police dogs to ensure that they meet animal welfare standards. The five welfare needs are documented in legislation for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The below guidelines are based on Section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (which applies in England and Wales) and section 24 (1) of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006.

The need for a suitable environment

Your dog needs a safe environment and whether they live inside or outside, they need protection from hazards. Examples of hazards in the home include: open windows and balconies, which may be inadequately protected to prevent your dog from falling from them; household and garden chemicals; and poisonous plants.

Dogs are naturally inquisitive and a dog may put themselves in danger if they are left to explore unsupervised. Your dog needs a safe, comfortable place to rest, situated in a dry, draught-free area. Living in a cold or damp place can lead to suffering. If your dog lives outside, they will need protection from adverse weather or other threats. All dogs must be able to avoid things that frighten them and need a place to hide where they feel safe.

A dog is naturally disinclined to soil their living space and needs regular opportunities to use a toilet area, or it will become distressed. Some dogs may need access to a toilet area more frequently, for example: very young, very old and those that are ill.

Dogs are vulnerable to heat stress. In hot weather they rapidly become distressed and can die in enclosed areas such as conservatories, vehicles, balconies and outdoor kennels. On warm days, these are inappropriate environments for a dog, even for a short time. Their bodies cannot cool like humans, and so heat can become dangerous very quickly.

What forces need to do

- Dogs are to be provided with a safe, clean and quiet environment, with adequate protection from hazards.
- Dogs are to be provided with a comfortable, clean, dry, quiet, draught-free rest area, which has appropriate ventilation and is lit either naturally or artificially.
- Dogs are to be provided with somewhere they can go to avoid things that frighten them.
- If dogs are to be kept in kennels they should be checked frequently to ensure they are not in danger or distress.
- Dogs are to have access to an appropriate place, away from where they rest and which they can use as a toilet area as regularly as required, and at least every few hours.
- Any place that the dog is left is to be large enough to allow the dog to move around in comfort, have effective ventilation and temperature control to avoid them becoming too hot or too cold.
- When in transport, dogs are to be comfortable and safe at all times.
- Dogs are not to be left unattended in any situation, or for any period of time that is likely to cause them distress, or render them unsafe.
- Dogs are to be kept under control and safe at all times and do not let them stray.



The need for a suitable diet

Diet includes water, and dogs need fresh, clean drinking water at all times. Without water to drink, a dog will become distressed and seriously ill. A dog needs a well-balanced diet to stay fit and healthy. Meals designed for people may not provide dogs with the balanced nutrition they need and some foods commonly found in the home, such as grapes, raisins, chocolate or onions, can be harmful or even fatal to dogs.

An individual dog's nutritional needs depend on their age, sex, activity, the type of food they eat, their state of health and whether they have been neutered. Some dogs, such as those that are pregnant, or nursing puppies, have special dietary needs. Diets designed for adult dogs are not always suitable for growing animals and puppies. Growing dogs may have special dietary requirements. Other dogs, for example; senior dogs, working dogs and those with poor health, may also require a special diet.

Dogs need at least one meal a day and how much an adult dog needs to eat depends on the type of food, their bodyweight and how active they are. A healthy adult dog should have a stable weight appropriate to their age, sex, breed and level of activity. Dogs should be neither too thin nor too fat. Overfeeding a dog will lead to them becoming overweight, which can lead to health problems. Underfeeding a dog will cause them to lose weight, suffer and can cause health problems.

Dogs can suffer from digestive problems that can be caused by their diet being changed suddenly. Strenuous exercise shortly before, or after, food can also be harmful.

What forces need to do

- Dogs are to be provided with clean fresh drinking water. If necessary carry water in a suitable container, when clean water is unlikely to be available.
- Dogs are to be given a balanced diet suitable for their individual needs in order to maintain a suitable weight for their age, sex, breed, level of activity and state of health and to ensure that they are not overweight or underweight.
- Be aware that any change in the amount dogs eat or drink may be a sign of ill health. If a dog's eating or drinking habits change, they are to consult a vet.
- Read and be guided by the feeding instructions relating to the dog food purchased.
- All dogs (including puppies) that have special needs, are to be provided with diets that meet their individual requirements.
- Adult dogs are to be fed at least once a day unless advised otherwise by a vet.
- Dog's diets are not to be changed suddenly. Changes should be made gradually over several days.
- Dogs are not to be fed shortly before, or after, strenuous exercise.
- If uncertain what to do, seek advice on feeding dogs from a vet or veterinary nurse.



The need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns

The way a dog behaves is individual and depends on their age, breed, rearing and past experiences. However, most dogs are playful sociable animals and enjoy regular opportunities for interactive playing with people, toys, people and other dogs which is an invaluable source of enrichment and fun.

Dogs are intelligent animals and can suffer from boredom. If your dog is bored and does not have enough to do, they may suffer or engage in inappropriate behaviour, excessive barking or destructive behaviour. Aggressive displays or changes in behaviour, including vocalisation and eating, may indicate that something is wrong with the dog's physical and mental health.

Dogs experience a range of emotions including happiness, anxiety, fearfulness and anger. How they behave and their body language can help you understand what they are feeling and whether they are physically and mentally fit and healthy.

All dogs, in particular puppies, need rest. However, individual dogs have different needs and some will sleep for long periods after exercise or food; others will need less rest and will be more active.

A dog needs regular exercise and regular opportunities to walk, run, explore, play, sniff and investigate. The amount of exercise a dog needs varies with age, breed and health. Some individuals need a lot of exercise and you should take account of this when choosing a dog. Young dogs may need to have their exercise restricted during periods of rapid growth to avoid developmental problems. Try to avoid exercising dogs in extreme weather, or during events which they may find frightening such as firework displays.

Training dogs is important to help them learn to behave appropriately and to make it easier to keep them under control. It can also help strengthen the relationship you have with them. It is important to seek professional advice to identify/discuss any behaviour problems and the best training options for your dog. An incorrect training regime can have negative effects on your dog's welfare. Reward based training which includes the use of things that dogs like or want (e.g. toys, food and praise) is enjoyable for your dog and is widely regarded as the preferred form of training dogs.

Training which includes physical punishment may cause pain, suffering and distress. These techniques can compromise a dog's welfare, leading to aggressive responses which may worsen the problems they aim to address. Puppies need to be carefully introduced to the many noises, objects and activities in their environment, some of which are frightening when first experienced. They also need to be adequately and carefully introduced to many different animals and people so that they learn how to interact appropriately and behave normally as adult dogs.



What forces need to do

- Dogs are to have enough to do so that they do not become distressed or bored.
- Dogs are to have access to safe toys and suitable objects to play with and chew. **For working dogs, certain toys are used to positively reward a dog for a particular behaviour, so it may not be possible for every working dog to have uncontrolled access to the enrichment toys. However other provision should be made for the dog to avoid boredom and perform the need to chew.**
- Dogs are to be able to rest undisturbed when they want to. Puppies and older animals may need more rest.
- Dogs are to be provided with regular opportunities for exercise and play with people or other friendly dogs, should they find this to be a positive experience.
- Dogs are to have the exercise they need, at least daily, unless a vet recommends otherwise, to keep them fit, active and stimulated.
- Know the behaviour of your dog when they are fit and healthy. If you become aware of changes in behaviour you should seek veterinary advice as your dog may be distressed, worried, bored, ill, injured, in pain or in discomfort.
- All dogs are to be trained to behave, ideally from a very young age and are to be introduced gradually and positively to different environments, people and animals. Reward based training methods, including food, toys and praise are to be used in dog training, avoiding harsh, potentially painful, or frightening training methods.

For working dogs, officers are required to follow guidelines in the Police Dog Training and Care Manual in relation to the use of approved equipment, compulsion and correction.

- Dog behaviour experts are to have a combination of appropriate qualifications, up to date knowledge, skills and experience and are to treat dogs in such a way that their welfare is protected.
Appropriate qualifications could be: member of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT), a certified clinical animal behaviourist (CCAB), accredited by Animal Behaviour and Training Council (ABTC).
- All dogs are to be kept under control at all times.



The need to be housed with, or apart from, other animals

Dogs are sociable animals that need, enjoy and value company. Consequently, many dogs do not like being left alone and may suffer if left without company, or with nothing to do for long periods of time. Some dogs become distressed and suffer if they are left on their own, even for short periods. Experts recommend four hours as the maximum time period.

The length of time individual dogs can be left varies, depending on factors such as age, training, previous experience of being left alone, breed or type, lifestyle and housing conditions. However, no dog should routinely be left on its own for prolonged periods. If the time alone is excessive, you can expect behavioural problems that are distressing for both you and your dog.

Learning to get on with people, dogs and other animals is an essential part of social development for a puppy. Puppies that are deprived of opportunities to develop social behaviour, or who are not introduced carefully, can become withdrawn, anxious and aggressive as adults. However, if a dog has appropriate contact with people, other dogs and animals early in their life, they will be more sociable and this can enhance their quality of life. Dogs that have not had opportunities to develop socially, perhaps by being removed from their mother or littermates too early, or which have had bad experiences involving people or other animals, may be frightened or aggressive in normal social situations or react inappropriately.

Dogs that are frightened show characteristic signs such as flattening of the ears and lowering of the tail or other signs of stress can be excessive panting, licking lips, hiding, cowering and aggression.

Dogs usually get on well with other dogs in the same household, but may need time to get to know each other. However they may need their own space and places to get away from other dogs. Dogs get to know the people with whom they regularly interact. They can become confused and distressed if the behaviour of those people is inconsistent and unpredictable. It is never acceptable to cause pain or injure a dog.



What forces need to do

- Dogs who value interactions are to have opportunities to spend enough time with people and friendly dogs so that they do not become lonely or bored.
- When dogs live together, they are to be provided with enough extra resources (e.g. toys, beds, food and water bowls and places where they feel safe) and space to stop them from becoming competitive and fighting with each other.
- Dogs are never to be left alone long enough to become distressed.
- Dogs are to be encouraged to be friendly towards other dogs and allowed to interact with friendly dogs on a regular basis, **if they enjoy these interactions.**
- Puppies are to be given regular and appropriate opportunities to learn how to interact with other dogs, animals and people.
- Always check health issues with a vet before allowing puppies to mix with other dogs.
- If dogs are not fully vaccinated, they are to check with a vet before mixing them with other dogs.
- Dogs are to be provided with regular exercise, play and training.
- Ensure that children are not left alone with a dog.
- If more than one dog is kept, they are to be kept together for company if possible. They will need to get on with each other, but will also need space to get away from each other when they want to.
- Handlers are to be consistent, kind and gentle in the way they, their family and friends react to the dog and are not to encourage aggressive or other anti-social behaviour.
- Forces are to ensure dogs are cared for by a responsible person. Those looking after dogs have a legal responsibility to ensure their welfare and it should be checked they understand the dog's needs and any special requirements they may have.

Police dog units may have a central police kennelling facility but a number of forces use appointed/approved private kennel facilities, which are inspected under the Independent Visitors Scheme.

- Forces are never to leave a dog unsupervised with another animal or person who may deliberately or accidentally harm or frighten them.
- If a dog is fearful of, and/or aggressive towards other dogs, handlers are to avoid the situations that lead to this behaviour and seek advice from a vet, veterinary nurse or suitably qualified dog behaviourist or trainer.

Police Dog Instructors are usually the first to advise on dog social issues within the police dog environment.



Chester was adopted to Warwickshire Police from Dogs Trust Kenilworth

Image: Bullivant Media

The booklet, '**The welfare of seized dogs in kennels: A guide to good practice, produced in consultation with police dog legislation officers, local authority dog wardens and animal welfare officers**', is a useful resource for those caring for and inspecting dogs in a kennelled environment.

The need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease

Dogs do feel pain and have similar pain thresholds to people. However, individual dogs and different breeds or types may show pain and suffering in different ways. Any change in the way a dog behaves can be an early sign that it is ill, or in pain. Dogs which are ill or in pain, often change their eating and drinking habits.

They may:

- Stop or reduce eating and lose weight
- Drink water excessively, drink less or not at all
- Become withdrawn and unwilling to exercise or play
- Cry when approached or touched
- Show uncharacteristic fear or aggression when approached
- Try to hide

They may also show specific signs of ill health such as:

- Discharges from the eyes, ears or nose
- Excessive salivation, vomiting, difficulties passing urine, diarrhoea or constipation
- Coughing or wheezing
- Excessively scratching and developing skin sores
- Limping or swelling

This list is for guidance only and is not exhaustive.

Dogs are vulnerable to a range of infectious diseases and other illnesses. They need protection from serious infections, which can be provided by vaccination. Like us, dogs benefit from routine health care.

Many people choose to have their dogs neutered. If you do not intend to breed your dog, your vet can advise on neutering and the welfare benefits of neutering dogs. If you decide to breed your dog, your vet can advise on the risks of inherited conditions and exaggerated features that could affect the welfare of the puppies. Puppies require care, must be microchipped before sale and cannot be sold under eight weeks. Raising puppies is difficult and time consuming, and the puppies are your responsibility, with the same needs as any dog under the Animal Welfare Act.



What forces need to do

- All persons responsible for a dog's care are to take sensible precautions to keep dogs safe from injury.
- Handlers are to monitor dogs daily and watch out for signs of injury, disease or illness. They are to make sure someone else does this if they are absent.
- If a change in a dog's behaviour is noted, a vet is to be contacted and the advice given followed.
- Handlers are to check dogs' coats regularly and groom them daily, to maintain a healthy coat.

Daily grooming is a requirement for police dogs as it promotes personal interaction between dog and handler as well as daily 'hands on' physical checking of the dog's health.

- A vet is to be consulted as to how often a dog needs a health check (minimum every 12 months) and about the things that can be done to protect a dog's health. Vet advice is to be followed.
- Routine preventative healthcare, such as vaccination and treatments to control parasites (e.g. fleas and worms), as well as any current health problems the dog may have, is to be carried out as an essential part of keeping a dog healthy.
- Dog faeces is to be regularly cleaned up to avoid disease transmission.
- All persons responsible for a dog's care are to take sensible precautions to keep dogs safe including prevention of access to poisonous food, plants, chemicals and any other hazards.
- All persons responsible for a dog's care are only to use medicines and drugs that have been prescribed for the individual dog.
- Human products and medicines intended for other animals can be dangerous to dogs and sometimes fatal. If handlers are unsure they are to seek veterinary advice.
- All persons responsible for a dog's care are always to consult a vet if they are concerned that a dog has eaten or come into contact with anything that could be harmful.

- Dogs are required to wear a collar and identity tag when in a public place. Collars are to be of the correct size and fit and are not to not cause any pain or discomfort. Handlers are to keep the microchip database up to date with any changes in keeper or contact details.

There is a legal exemption within the Control of Dogs Order 1992 which allows police dogs not to wear a collar. Some officers will insist on not wearing a collar as it could cause an injury to the dog whilst working if the collar were to get caught on something. Other officers' dogs do wear collars and in these cases, observations should be made on the fit of the collar.

- If considering having a dog neutered, a vet is to advise about the best age to have this done.
- Forces are to seek the advice of a vet before allowing a dog to breed and take all reasonable steps to ensure that they will be able to provide the care required during pregnancy as well as finding suitable homes for the puppies. **Any puppies bred as potential police dogs must be housed in an appropriate environment, ensuring their needs are met. These not suitable for police work may be rehomed to families and due diligence should be undertaken in rehoming. Advice can be sought from [Dogs Trust](#).**



Guidelines for the Animal Welfare Independent Visitors Scheme

The purpose of the scheme is to enable Independent Visitors 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 the handling and care of dogs within the police service. The scheme covers all people who interact with the dog; including trainers and handlers, and covers all places such as police dog units, kennels and police vehicles.

Appointment of Independent Visitors

The Police and Crime commissioner in consultation with the Chief Constable will be responsible for the selection and appointment of Animal Welfare Independent Visitors. The nominated Police Dog Officer for the force will provide the necessary support to the Police and Crime Commissioner. Subject to the exceptions set out below, applications will be sought from any person and professionals from animal welfare organisations.

The panel of Animal Welfare Independent Visitors should be representative of the local community and try to achieve a balance in terms of age range, gender and ethnic minority representation.

Eligibility

Independent Visitors should be persons of good character who are able to make unbiased observations in which the community can have confidence and which the police will accept as fair criticism when it is justified. Anyone who has been convicted of a criminal offence, or who has been charged with any animal welfare offence may not be suitable for this reason. Applicants will be asked to include on their application form details of any such convictions and consent to enquiries being made by the police.

Magistrates, serving or former police officers or special constables and OPCC staff are not eligible to become Independent Visitors as this could be seen to lack transparency. Other people may be excluded, if they have a direct involvement in the criminal justice system such as solicitors or probation officers.

Each application will be treated on its merits, but the overriding factor will be to prevent possible conflicts of interest for individuals, and to maintain the independence and integrity of the scheme as a whole. There will be a vetting or screening process required by individual police forces to ensure the safe appointment of suitable Independent Visitors taking into account local security risks or issues.



Training

Before undertaking duties as an Animal Welfare Independent Visitor, the individual should receive training, consisting of such topics as training methods, animal welfare (which can be provided by a representative from Dogs Trust), transportation and health and safety. Additionally, periodic and refresher training days are to be available for all Independent Visitors to attend and must include any updates in legislation and or recommendations arising as a result of learning from incidents or experiences.

One annual practical dog training day should be arranged for all Independent Visitors and animal welfare organisations to attend annually where they should meet with staff of the dog units.

Accreditation and handbook

Once appointed, the Independent Visitor will usually be issued with an identity card signed by the Chief Constable and including the holder's photograph; this is dependent on the force's procedures. The identity card will authorise the holder to undertake a visit in accordance with the scheme. The pass should be worn visibly on the outer clothing when on police premises.

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

Each Independent Visitor will receive a local handbook, produced by the force, containing details of the operation of the scheme, a list of the police premises subject to the scheme, a list of the members of the visiting panel, including contact telephone numbers and a list of all current police dog handlers and their dogs.

Term of office for Independent Visitors

Newly appointed Independent Visitors will complete a six month probationary period. The term of office for Animal Welfare Independent Visitors should be three years with an option for a further three year term.

Although the work is entirely voluntary, the Police and Crime Commissioner has the right to terminate the appointment of any Independent Visitor whose conduct is not felt to be of the required standard. Independent Visitors should notify the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner if they are arrested and charged with a criminal offence or under investigation for any animal welfare offence. They will be suspended from undertaking further visits pending the outcome of any criminal proceedings. The Police and Crime Commissioner will consider whether to withdraw the accreditation of any visitor convicted of a criminal offence or who abuses his or her position as an Animal Welfare Independent Visitor by behaving in an inappropriate manner during visits.

Where a visitor fails to make an independent visit and/or attend panel meetings within a three month period, the Police and Crime Commissioner will write to the person concerned to establish whether this is simply an oversight (e.g. because report forms have not been submitted), or to seek an explanation.

Where an individual has not made any visits or attended any panel meetings within a six month period, and no good reason for this has been notified to the administrator of the scheme, the Police and Crime Commissioner will automatically revoke that individual's accreditation.



Frequency of visits

The dog unit or location from where dog handlers deploy should ideally be visited every three months. The Animal Welfare Independent Visitor will liaise with the nominated Police Dog Officer. All dogs and handlers are seen at least once in any 12-month period. This may require some coordination by the nominated Police Dog Officer to ensure all the dogs and handlers are seen. No handler should go 18 months without being seen by an Independent Visitor.

Animal Welfare Independent Visitors may inspect the conditions in which dogs are kept and be allowed access to any welfare, training and veterinary records appertaining to those animals. They may also speak to trainers, trainees, dog handlers and support staff and see force policy and Standard Operating Procedures relating to the health and management of dogs.

Police dogs are often boarded in private boarding kennels and the Independent Visitors are to review those facilities as well. Whilst the boarding kennels will hold an Animal Boarding Establishment Licence issued by the Local Authority and will be subject to the conditions of the licence, police dogs can pose additional dangers to boarding kennel staff due to the nature of police dog training. Any adaptations made by the boarding kennels to safely manage the kennelling of police dogs need to be reviewed to ensure all aspects of animal welfare are still maintained accordingly.

From time to time, Animal Welfare Independent Visitors may also wish to look at 'offsite' training. Such 'offsite' training may involve Animal Welfare Independent Visitors walking over rough fields. With this in mind the Police and Crime Commissioner will look to appoint those people who would be capable of carrying out this type of activity. Because of the diverse locations, Animal Welfare Independent Visitors should, in those instances, arrange visits through the Scheme Administrator or the nominated Police Dog Officer.

The Police and Crime Commissioner may review the frequency of visits from time to time in light of experience.

Should an Animal Welfare Independent Visitor have concerns regarding the identity of a particular dog, the Animal Welfare Independent Visitor may request that the dog's microchip is scanned in front of them so the microchip number can be verified against the dog's identity.



Confidentiality

During the course of their duties, Animal Welfare Independent Visitors may acquire confidential information about police issues, and Independent Visitors will be asked to sign an undertaking of confidentiality. Visitors should be aware that the improper disclosure of information acquired during a visit may attract civil or criminal proceedings. It is stressed that confidential information must not be included in the written reports of the visit to the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Should an Animal Welfare Independent Visitor receive information or a complaint in confidence regarding the welfare of a particular dog, this information should be forwarded immediately to the nominated Police Dog Officer (acting for the Police and Crime Commissioner and the PCC administrator for the scheme) and the animal welfare organisation representative on the panel.

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

Conduct

When conducting a visit, the Animal Welfare Independent Visitor(s) will at all times, be accompanied by a dog handler, or a member of staff at the dog training centre. Independent Visitors must adhere to advice given by dog handlers or members of staff at the dog training centre with regard to any health and safety issues.

All visits carried out by Animal Welfare Independent Visitors must meet the accepted standards outlined in this booklet and detailed in the training provided by Dogs Trust.

Inspections of home kennels

Independent Visitors will not normally be entitled to visit officers' private residences to inspect kennel facilities but will seek to inspect written records that handlers' home kennels have been regularly inspected (at least every two years) by a suitable representative of the police force. The Independent Visitors will bring to the attention of the nominated Police Dog Officer 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 the Independent Visitor, the nominated Police Dog Officer will submit a full report to the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Visits at the request of the police

Circumstances may arise where the police wish to initiate a visit by an Animal Welfare Independent Visitor, in particular where there may be serious local concern about the treatment and well-being of police dogs, and a special visit could help allay public fears. The nominated Police Dog Officer 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 any Independent Visitor who happens to be qualified in animal welfare, a Dogs Trust representative can also be requested. This would include allegations in relation to an officer's home address.



Completion of reports

At the conclusion of each visit, the Animal Welfare Independent Visitor will complete a report form as soon as possible. Copies are to be sent within 14 days of the visit to the Police and Crime Commissioner and the nominated Police Dog Officer.

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner shall periodically distribute all reports amongst the panel in order to keep panel members informed of the scheme's progress.

Reports on issues arising out of visits

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) will call two panel meetings per year. The panel will consist of Independent Visitors for that force, Dogs Trust (or other animal welfare organisation) representatives, Dog Unit Manager and PCC administrator for the Animal Welfare Scheme, which will allow the discussion of visiting arrangements and any concerns to be brought to the attention of the officers in charge. Issues arising out of visits will also be submitted to the Police and Crime Commissioner, and subsequently to any relevant Police and Community Forums.

It is also expected that Independent Visitors will report on their visits in general terms to their local Police and Community Forum, at an appropriate time of the year, e.g. the Annual General Meeting and Panel Meetings. Such reports may be given in writing or verbally.



Expenses

The work is entirely voluntary, but travelling expenses will be payable to all Independent Visitors on the same basis as to members of the Police and Crime Commissioner office when travelling on business. Only public transport expenses and private car mileage at the agreed rate will be paid. Expenses can also be claimed for attending training sessions. Expense claims must be made on the appropriate form.

Insurance

The Police and Crime Commissioner's office will arrange appropriate insurance for Independent Visitors. All Animal Welfare Independent Visitors will receive information and advice on risk assessments.

Publicity Guidelines

It is generally desirable that the role and aims of the scheme should be promoted to the public. Independent Visitors must 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, local groups or organisations (other than the Police and Community Forums), about any aspect of independent visiting should be referred to the Police and Crime Commissioner's office and should not be undertaken by individual Independent Visitors except at the request of the Police and Crime Commissioner's office, who will in normal circumstances have consulted with the Chief Constable. Independent Visitors should remember that they are accountable to the Police and Crime Commissioner, and not to the press or individual members of the public.

