



KIM MCGUINNESS
NORTHUMBRIA
POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER

INDEPENDENT DOG WELFARE VISITORS SCHEME

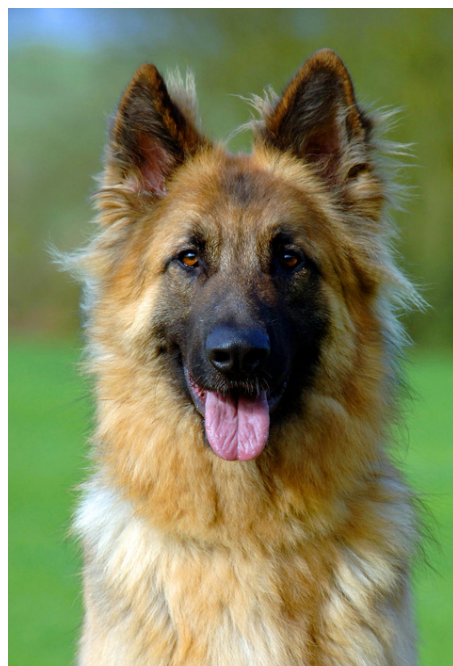
ANNUAL REPORT

2022 - 2023



CONTENTS

03	WELCOME FROM THE COMMISSIONER
04 - 05	NORTHUMBRIA POLICE DOG SECTION - OVERVIEW
06	ABOUT OUR SCHEME & VISITING ARRANGEMENTS
07	REPORTING & RECORDING VISITS
07	QUARTLEY PANEL MEETINGS
08	VISITS FROM THE PAST YEAR & FINDINGS
08	DOG SECTION UPDATE



WELCOME

FROM THE COMMISSIONER

Over the last year, Independent Dog Welfare Visitors continued to provide independent external scrutiny of the care and treatment of our police dogs in Northumbria. They ensured that procedures and the care provided is ethical, humane and transparent in accordance with the Animal Welfare Act 2006. The welfare scheme continued to operate providing assurance to residents of the Northumbria force area that police dogs are being well cared for. The report highlights the work that visitors have taken including visits to both kennel complexes, police stations and the training venues of our dogs.

As a result, 24 visits were undertaken between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 and 132 dogs checked, which is excellent. I am pleased to note that the Dog Welfare Visitors did not raise any serious concerns for those dogs that they visited. During the periods of hot weather in the summer our visitors were instrumental in undertaking extra checks on the dogs to ensure temperatures were correct and dogs were comfortable and ensured measures were put in place to mitigate any issues. Following points raised by visitors our officers now have access to remote temperature readers and additional works have been carried out to the kennel complex where dogs are housed when not with their handlers.

The above changes introduced show the positive impact that the visitors have had and I would like to thank both my visitors and the Northumbria Police dog section for their work over the year.

Best Wishes,



Kim McGuinness
Northumbria Police & Crime Commissioner



OVERVIEW

BY SGT ADAM FEGAN

The Independent Dog Welfare Visitors continue to provide essential scrutiny into the wellbeing and care of our Police Dogs across Northumbria. With a team of approximately 65 dogs working 24/7 across the force area, we are grateful to the coordination team from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner in their attempts to maximise the number of visits from their pool of dedicated volunteers. As a Dog Sergeant I see every day the passion and dedication our Dog Handlers and training team display towards their dogs and I'm proud of the work our teams perform in supporting operational policing. The Dog Welfare Visitors Scheme gives us the opportunity to share this training, care, and professionalism with the visiting volunteers.



The scheme also gives us the opportunity to listen and learn, the volunteers have varying backgrounds and experiences in the world of dog care and training. It has been a pleasure to work with them over the last 12 months, particularly on suggestions to improve the enrichment of our dogs whilst in the kennel environment.

OVERVIEW

BY SGT ADAM FEGAN

It is without doubt that equipment, protocols, and investment we have benefited from over the last 12 months wouldn't have been possible without the support of the welfare visitors. Of particular note is the investment in dog body armour for all of our front-line General Purpose Dogs. The armour is now worn at all dog deployments where there is a likelihood of conflict. The armour affords our dogs a similar level of protection to the armour worn by our handlers and has been very well received by both our staff and the public.

The scheme can present logistical issues at times, it is a requirement that every dog is seen at least once a year however, the unpredictable nature of policing can sometimes make this difficult. It is thanks to the flexibility and dedication of the volunteers that has helped us overcome these difficulties. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank them all for their understanding and continued support and look forward to building on our relationship in 2024.

Sgt Adam Fegan
Northumbria Police Dog Section



ABOUT

OUR DOG WELFARE SCHEME & VISITING ARRANGEMENTS

The Northumbria Dog Welfare Visiting Scheme was established in September 2021 with the aim of the scheme to inspect each police dog at least every 12 months. There are currently 65 dogs however this number regularly changes due to dogs retiring and new dogs coming on board. We have 6 Dog Welfare Visitors who follow a set rota for the full year incorporating visits to Etal Lane Police Station (excluding September), quarterly visits to the kennel complex currently in our neighbouring force Durham and quarterly visits to see our dogs in training.

Independent Dog Welfare Visitors are members of the public who observe, comment and report on the condition of the police dogs and their means of transportation whilst on duty. To maintain the scheme's independence and avoid any conflict of interest, visitors have no direct involvement with Northumbria Police. They are not allowed to be a serving or retired police officer, a member of police staff, Police Community Support Officer, Special Constable or Magistrate. Visitors carry out inspections on all police dogs within the Dog Unit. The Unit includes 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 and include dogs that specialise in detecting drugs, cash, guns, weapons, and explosives.



REPORTING

AND RECORDING VISITS

Visitors record all observations, comments and any concerns relating to welfare needs on a report form that we have recently worked with the Dogs Trust to make electronic. This allows visitors to access a set of questions which changes depending on their type of visit to be quickly and easily completed online and submitted electronically. If a welfare issue is reported, the Scheme Administrator will raise this directly with the Dog Unit Sergeant who is the lead contact for the scheme. Any action taken to resolve issues is recorded by the Scheme Administrator and discussed at quarterly Dog Welfare Visitor meetings. All information noted on the report form or gathered at the visits is confidential for use by the OPCC and Dog Unit.

In addition, each year the Dog Unit must submit the following forms for all dogs or officers home kennels:

- Annual Vet Form
- Annual Handler Home Kennel form

QUARTLEY

PANEL MEETINGS

Quarterly Panel Meetings are held with Visitors and representatives from the Dog Unit and the Dogs Trust. This is an opportunity to make Visitors aware of any legislative changes and updates from the Dog Unit, as well as for the unit to receive feedback directly from Visitors.

VISITS

FROM PAST YEAR & FINDINGS

Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, visitors completed 24 visits, resulting in 132 dog checks. The visits took place at Etal Lane Police Station, Durham Constabulary Kennels and a training location in the North East. Visitors monitor the condition of the police dogs and their means of transportation while on duty. Over the last twelve months no serious concerns were noted.

Visitors were very useful in assisting in increased reporting during periods of hot weather over the summer months. Their visits and comments assisted in the introduction of:

- Provision of dog body armour for all General Purpose Dogs.
- Temperature monitors – handlers now have instant remote access to check the temperature of the place where their dogs are housed when they are on leave.
- Works undertaken at Durham Police Kennels facility including roofing, air conditioning system and increased staffing.
- Replacement matting in dog vans.

DOG

SECTION UPDATE

The last 12 months have seen the Dog Section retire 23 dogs for a variety of reasons, these included their age, on medical grounds or not meeting the required standard. All of the dogs were found good homes or were retired to live with their former handlers. 12 new general-purpose dogs have qualified and are now working throughout the Northumbria Police area. In addition, the department have recruited and trained 2 Digital Media Detection Dogs, both of which are being used to search for concealed digital media and devices in support of police investigations.



KIM MCGUINNESS
NORTHUMBRIA
**POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER**



INDEPENDENT DOG WELFARE VISITORS SCHEME ANNUAL REPORT

2022-23