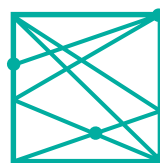
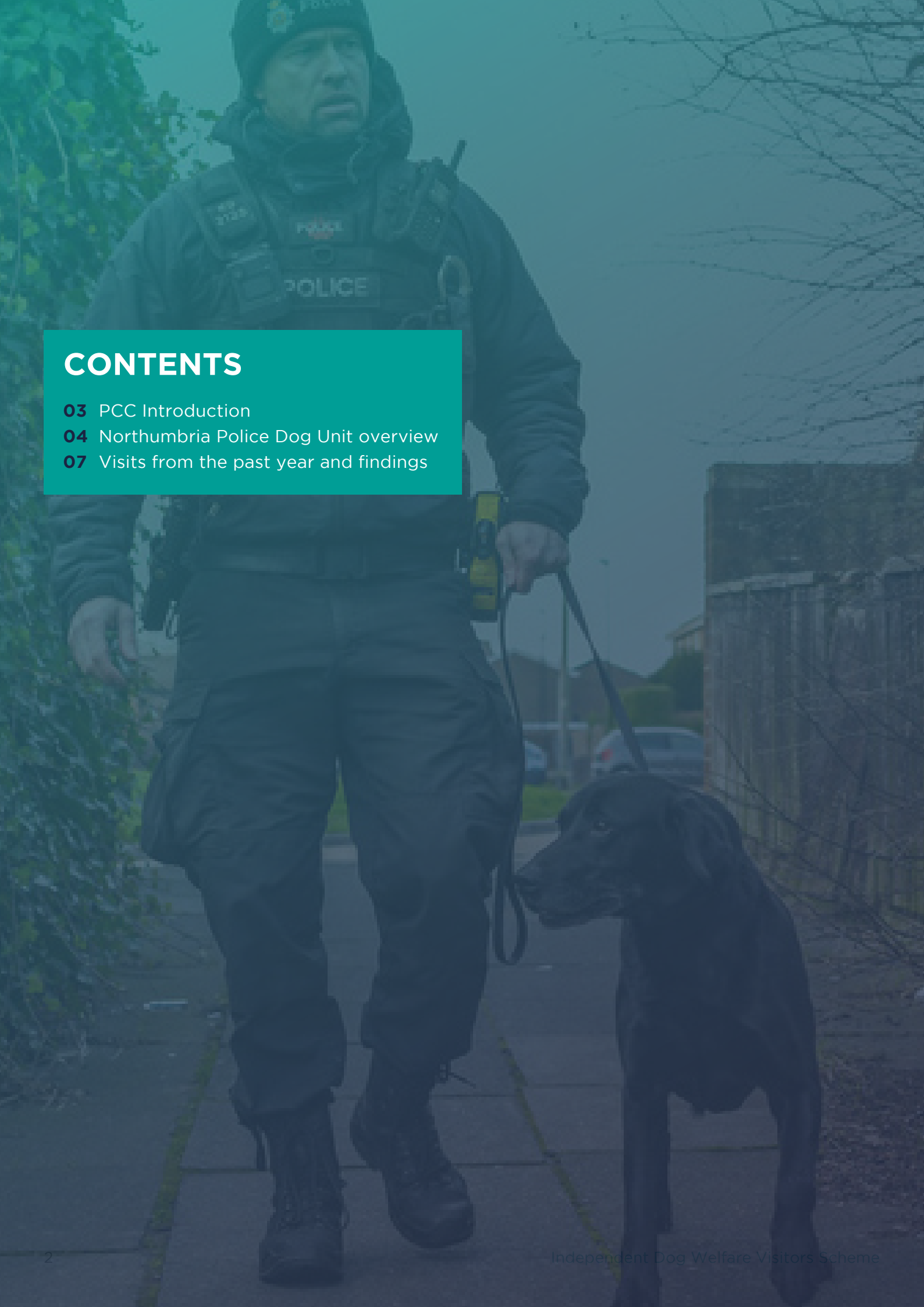




Independent Dog Welfare Visitors Scheme Annual Report 2025-26



SUSAN DUNGWORTH
NORTHUMBRIA
**POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER**

A full-page background image showing a police officer in tactical gear, including a vest with 'POLICE' and 'PCC' patches, walking a black dog on a leash. The officer is looking off to the side. The image has a teal overlay.

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PCC INTRODUCTION

I am pleased to be presenting my annual report to highlight the continued work of our Dog Welfare Visitors over the last year.

Our visitors provide independent external scrutiny of the care and treatment of our police dogs in the force area. They ensured that procedures and the care provided is ethical, humane and transparent in accordance with the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

The welfare scheme provides reassurance to residents of Northumbria force area that our police dogs are being well cared for. The report highlights the work that visitors have taken including visits to both kennels, police stations, training venues and vehicles used to transport our dogs.

20 visits were undertaken between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026 and 114 dogs checked, no serious concerns were raised, a few minor points relating to chewed matting in vans were quickly rectified by officers with new matting being ordered and fitted to vehicles.

Northumbria Police are moving forward in the process of evaluating the construction of their own kennels with a site identified and plans drawn up. I am pleased that our dog welfare visitors experience and knowledge has been utilised in the ongoing planning of the new kennels. Dog welfare visitors will be updated by the dog section lead on progress over the coming year.

Our visitors have created a positive impact in ensuring our dogs remain fit and healthy and ready to serve. I would like to thank our visitors for all their hard work during the year.

Best Wishes



Susan Dungworth





NORTHUMBRIA POLICE DOG UNIT – OVERVIEW

The Northumbria Police Dog Section continues to deliver a broad range of specialist operational capabilities in support of frontline policing across the force area. Alongside this operational role, maintaining the highest possible standards of welfare and care for our police dogs remains a core priority. The Independent Dog Welfare Visitors Scheme continues to play an important role in providing external scrutiny, challenge, transparency and reassurance in relation to these standards.

Over the last year, the relationship between the Dog Section and the Welfare Visitors has continued to develop positively. The scheme provides valuable opportunities for open discussion around training, kennel standards, operational deployment, and general welfare considerations. The experience and knowledge brought by the volunteers has contributed to constructive feedback and informed discussions around areas for ongoing improvement and development.

Work has also continued in relation to the proposed new Northumbria Police kennel facility. Welfare Visitors have remained involved during the early planning and consultation stages, allowing the department to benefit from independent perspectives during the development process. The project is currently in the final planning stage, the visitors continued engagement will remain important as the project moves forward.

At the time of writing, the Dog Section has 49 dogs. This includes 18 General Purpose dogs, supported by a further 4 dogs currently undergoing training. The department also maintains specialist capabilities in Firearms support, Drugs, Weapons and Cash detection, Forensic Evidence Search, Explosive Detection, and Digital Media Detection. In addition, the section currently has a General Purpose puppy, a spare General Purpose dog, and a brood bitch as part of its wider capability and development planning.

Since April 2025, 12 dogs have been rehomed after not achieving the required operational standard. During the same period, 7 dogs have retired from service due to age, medical grounds, or welfare considerations, with 6 of those dogs retiring to live with their former handlers. A further 2 dogs are scheduled to retire during June 2026.

Demand linked to legislation under the Dangerous Dogs Act continues to generate significant workload for the Dog Legislation Team. The management of exempted dogs, management and examination of seized dogs, alongside intelligence-led enforcement activity, remains an important area of work in reducing risk and supporting public safety across our communities.

I would like to thank the Independent Dog Welfare Visitors for the continued professionalism, support, and constructive engagement they have shown throughout the year. Their involvement remains an important part of ensuring transparency and maintaining high welfare standards within the Dog Section.

**Temporary Police Sergeant
2985 Jonathan Golightly**



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- Established in 2021
- 5 Independent Dog Welfare Visitors.
- Each of our police dogs are visited every 12 months.

- 49 dogs
- 5 Independent Dog Welfare Visitors.
- All our police dogs are visited every 12 months.

- Visits made to training facilities, kennels and police vehicles used to transport our dogs.
- Visitors use questions produced by the Dogs Trust to record their findings on each visit.
- The scheme also ensures dogs are seen by vets on an annual basis and officers home kennel checks have been undertaken.



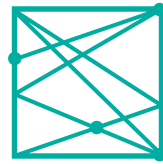


VISITS FROM THE PAST YEAR AND FINDINGS

- Between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026, visitors completed 20 visits, resulting in 114 dog checks.
- All dogs visited.
- All home kennel check forms received.
- All annual vet forms received.

- No issues identified with any dogs visited.
- Visitors have been working to improve the questions asked during visits. This will ensure a smoother process for both visitor and officer, with the new questions being more suited to the specific type of visits undertaken. Proposed questions will be put to the Dogs Trust for their comments to ensure they align with their “5 Freedoms” focus.
- Enrichment – introduction of frozen Kongs for dogs housed at Durham Kennel complex with further work ongoing to further increase enrichment activities.
- Replacement matting in dog vans.
- Input into the design of future new Northumbria Police kennels including a visit to the proposed site and input on plans.





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