



ANIMAL WELFARE LAY VISITORS SCHEME

Objective:

To restore public confidence in Police dog training, with the introduction of the Animal Welfare Lay Visitors Scheme. Enabling the public to observe that Police dog treatment and care is humane, ethical and transparent and thereby assists in restoring confidence.

1.0 Organisation:

- 1.1 The operation of the scheme would be the responsibility of the Police Authority and they would have the final responsibility in all matters relating to administration of the scheme.
- 1.2 The Police Authority would also be responsible for the selection and appointment of Animal Welfare Lay Visitors and would consult the Chief Constable and appropriate national animal welfare organisation, the RSPCA, before any appointment is made.
- 1.3 Animal Welfare Lay Visitors would be independent members of the local community.
- 1.4 Lay Visitors would come from a variety of backgrounds and have no involvement in the criminal justice system, thereby maintaining independence of the scheme.
- 1.5 The Lay Visitors could visit Police Stations unannounced and ask to see the dog handler on duty – operational commitments permitting – to check on the welfare of the dog.
- 1.6 Visitors would not be entitled to visit dog handlers' private residences to inspect kennel facilities, but in exceptional circumstances an appointment could be made through the Dog Section Supervisor for a home visit.

2.0 Number of Visitors – Methods of Appointment

- 2.1 The panel should be representative of the local community and the Police Authority should endeavor to achieve a balance in terms of age, gender and ethnic minority representation.

The Police Authority could vary the number of visitors on the panel in light of experience.
- 2.2 Visitors should be independent persons of good character who can make unbiased observations and provide documented feedback.
- 2.3 Anyone who has been convicted of an offence or who has been charged with any animal welfare issue would not be a suitable candidate.



- 2.4 Applicants will be asked to include on their application forms details of any such convictions and consent to enquires being made by the Police and appropriate professional national animal welfare organisations.
- 2.5 When the information provided by the Police or animal welfare organisations differ from that provided by the applicant, the Police Authority would discuss the discrepancy with the person concerned before deciding whether or not to appoint.
- 2.6 Elected members of the Police Authority, provided they are not magistrates, would be eligible to become lay visitors.
- 2.7 The Police Authority would not appoint magistrates, serving or former, Police officers or Special Constables as lay visitors. Other people may be excluded if they have any direct involvement with the criminal justice system, such as solicitors or probation officers.
- 2.8 Each application should be treated on its merits, but the overriding factor will be to prevent possible conflict of interest for individuals and to maintain the independence and integrity of the scheme as a whole.
- 3.0 **Training:**
- 3.1 Applicants will be invited to attend information/training sessions organised by the Police Authority in consultation with, the Chief Constable, Dog Supervisors and the appropriate professional national welfare organisations. The training would be of one day's duration and will include training methods, animal welfare, transportation and health and safety.
- 3.2 In response to new training practices and procedures adopted by the Police, the Police Authority may periodically arrange additional training sessions.
- 4.0 **Accreditation and Handbook:**
- 4.1 The Police Authority would issue each Lay Visitor with an identity card signed by the Chief Constable and showing the holder's photograph.
- 4.2 The identity card should only be used for the purpose of making lay visits and if a member is found using their card for any other purpose it would be withdrawn and the Lay Visitor's appointment terminated.
- 4.3 Each visitor would receive a handbook containing details of the operation of the scheme, including a list of Police Stations, members of the visiting panel, contact numbers and a



list of Police Dog Handlers and their dogs.

5.0 Termination of Office:

5.1 Newly appointed Lay Visitors would complete a six months probationary period

5.2 The term of office for a Lay Visitor could be three years with an option for renewal for a further three-year term. Each Animal Welfare Lay Visitor should hold office for the period for which he or she is appointed, provided that the Police Authority may, at its discretion, terminate his or her appointment at any time.

6.0 Removal From Visitors Panel:

6.1 The Police Authority would have the right to terminate the appointment of any Lay Visitor whose conduct is not felt to be of the required standard.

6.2 If a Lay Visitor is arrested and charged with a criminal offence or under investigation for any criminal animal welfare issue they should notify the Clerk of the Police Authority. They would be suspended from undertaking further visits pending any outcome.

6.3 The Police Authority should consider withdrawing the accreditation of any Lay Visitor convicted of a criminal offence or who abuses his or her position as an Animal Welfare Lay Visitor by behaving in an inappropriate manner during visits.

6.4 When an individual has not made any visits or attended any panel meetings within a six month period and that particular person has forwarded no good reason to the panel, the Police Authority could automatically revoke that individual's accreditation.

7.0 Arrangements For Home Visits:

7.1 The Animal Welfare Lay Visitor may obtain from the Force Operations Room Inspector details of any dog and handler on duty at that time, the area they are covering and request their attendance at the nearest Police Station.

7.2 The Dog Handler – operational commitments permitting – should be called immediately. If the Handler cannot attend, a full explanation should be given to the Lay Visitor and the explanation should be recorded in their report.

7.3 If Lay Visitors wish to visit training venues, it may involve walking over rough and uneven ground/farmland. With this in mind the Police Authority would look to appoint people capable of carrying out this activity. Any training site visits should be conducted through



the Dog Section Sergeant, as most of the venues are on private land. Visitors will, at all times, be accompanied by a member of the Dog Section and advice will be given regarding Health and Safety.

8.0 Confidentiality:

8.1 During the course of their duties, Animal Welfare Lay Visitors may acquire confidential information about Police issues and would therefore be required to sign an undertaking of confidentiality.

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

9.0 Meetings:

9.1 The scheme administrator would call bi-annual meetings of lay visitors, which would allow the discussion of visiting arrangements and any concerns to be brought to the notice of the officers in charge.

9.2 Issues arising out of such meetings will be submitted to the Police Authority and the Chief Constable.

10.0 Expenses:

10.1 The work is entirely voluntary, but travelling expenses would be paid at an agreed rate, funded by the Police Authority.

11.0 Publicity:

11.1 It is desirable that the role and aims of the scheme should be promoted to the public. Visitors would be reminded that it is not our purpose to draw attention to individual cases or themselves.

11.2 Any invitation to speak to the Public or Press should be referred to the Police Authority, who will liaise with the Chief Constable.

11.3 Lay visitors should remember that they are accountable to the Police Authority not the Press or individual members of the public.