

**OFFICE OF THE POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR GWENT**

**ANIMAL WELFARE AWV SCHEME HANDBOOK**

**(Revised October 2023)**

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**OFFICE OF THE POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR GWENT**

**ANIMAL WELFARE SCHEME**

# **FOREWORD**

This handbook has been designed to help Animal Welfare AWVs (AWV) carry out their role of monitoring the welfare of Gwent Police dogs and the conditions under which they are kept/worked.

If you have any queries not covered by the contents of this handbook, please contact the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner’s (OPCC) Scheme Manager on 01633 642200.

# **BACKGROUND TO THE SCHEME**

The death of police dog ‘Acer’ whilst in training in Essex in 1997 and the subsequent prosecution of police officers, resulted in a considerable loss of public confidence in police dog training methods, generated adverse comment in the media and caused animal welfare organisations such as the RSPCA and the Dogs Trust (formerly National Canine Defence League) to stop donating dogs to the police service.

The then Association of Chief Police Officers (now National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC)) Police Dog Sub-Committee embarked upon a thorough review of police dog training resulting in the development of a strategy aimed at restoring public confidence by ensuring that police dog training methods are humane, ethical and transparent.

The training and welfare of animals engaged on police work must be open and importantly, be seen to be open. To this end, an Animal Welfare Scheme (the Scheme) was introduced to enable members of the local community to observe and report upon the conditions under which police dogs are housed, trained and transported. In response to these issues, the Scheme was established by Gwent Police Authority. When Police Authorities ceased in November 2012 the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent, recognising the value of their work, decided to support the work of the Scheme and maintain its scrutiny role under the remit of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

AWVs are independent members of the local community who visit police dog training centres and police stations to check on the welfare of animals engaged in police work. As Gwent has no kennels visits are pre-arranged with officers to meet AWVs, with their police dogs, at specific locations within Gwent so that both the vehicle and dogs can be checked together. AWVs may be periodically accompanied by professionals from animal welfare organisations. AWVs come from a variety of backgrounds and sections of the community and have no direct or indirect involvement in the criminal justice system. This is to prevent possible conflicts of interests for the individual, and to maintain the independence of the scheme as a whole.

# **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SCHEME**

The Scheme was established in the Gwent Force area in 2005 by Gwent Police Authority in consultation with the Chief Constable of Gwent and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSCPA).

Responsibility for the running of the Scheme has been delegated by the Chief Executive to the Governance Officer (“the Scheme Manager”). This includes oversight of the Scheme and the responsibility of ensuring the Police and Crime Commissioner is informed of any issues raised. Low level complaints will be managed by the Chair and Vice Chair, however, the Scheme Manager will be responsible for any serious complaints or grievances raised against any Scheme members or by Scheme members.

The role of the Scheme Manager is to ensure that the Scheme is properly run and includes:

* Liaising with the Chair and Vice Chair to address any problems that arise in the running of the Scheme; problems accessing dogs, estates issues, any conduct, performance or participation matters.
* Recruitment, selection and training of new AWVs.
* Conduct reviews on a 3-yearly basis with individual AWVs.
* To process all HR related paperwork to ensure AWVs are fully compliant e.g. vetting up to date, volunteer agreements signed.
* Write to AWVs to keep them up to date with any changes affecting the Scheme.

The OPCC’s Administrative Assistant will provide administrative support to the Scheme by:

* Drafting and circulating meeting agendas in liaison with the Scheme Manager, Chair and Vice Chair.
* Drafting and circulating meeting minutes.

# **OBJECTIVES**

The purpose of these visiting arrangements is to enable appointed members of the local community and professionals from animal welfare organisations to observe, comment and report upon the welfare of dogs engaged in police work in Gwent and the condition under which police dogs are housed, trained, transported and deployed with a view to securing greater understanding and confidence in these matters.

These arrangements also provide a mechanism for an independent check on the way police dog handlers carry out their responsibilities with regard to animals in their care. In addition, details of the dogs’ medical history will be made available for AWVs.

# **ANIMAL WELFARE AWVS**

## **Eligibility**

Subject to the exceptions set out below, any person aged 18 and over at the time of appointment and residing, working or studying within the Gwent force area, may be appointed by the OPCC as an AWV. Subject to being able to obtain appropriate insurance cover there will be no maximum age limit.

AWVs should be independent 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 an offence and served a term of imprisonment or detention may not be suitable for this reason. Applicants will therefore be asked to include on their application forms details of any such convictions, other than those which are spent by reason of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and to consent to police vetting enquiries being made. Where the information provided by the police differs from that provided by the applicant, the OPCC may choose to discuss the discrepancy with the person concerned before deciding whether or not to appoint. Any person who has been convicted of an offence involving cruelty to animals will not be appointed to the Scheme.

The Police and Crime Commissioner will not appoint serving Police Officers, Special Constables or any other serving staff members of any Police force or OPCC. Ex police officers or ex staff members may apply provided they have left the Force or OPCC for a minimum of 1 year. Anybody with a direct involvement in the Criminal Justice System such as Magistrates, Solicitors or Probation Officers will also not be appointed.  The over-riding factor when considering applications will be to prevent possible conflicts of interest for individuals, and to maintain the independence and integrity of the Scheme as a whole, however, each application will be treated on its own merits.

##  **Recruitment**

The Gwent OPCC will seek to recruit AWVs by inviting applications from the local community, professionals from the RSPCA and other suitable organisations. This will be done by means of advertisements on the OPCC website and any other means which the OPCC may consider suitable.

The Gwent OPCC will seek to recruit AWVs from all sections of the community to reflect its diversity in relation to race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion and belief, age, and Welsh language, in accordance with OPCC policies.

## **Application Process**

Interested parties will be sent an application pack containing background information about the Scheme.

Applicants will be expected to demonstrate good communication skills and the ability to work with others.

##

## **Selection**

Applicants will be invited to attend an interview conducted by representatives of the OPCC. The interview panel may also involve either the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Scheme. Apart from the RSPCA representatives nominated by the RSPCA, all persons shall be appointed as an AWV via an interview process.

Following the interviews, a final decision will be made by the interviewing panel as to who should be appointed.

## **Appointment and vetting**

Appointment to the Scheme is subject to completion of vetting to the Non-Police Personnel Vetting level 1. Outcomes of such checks will assist in determining a candidates suitability to the role.

Successful candidates will be expected to sign a Volunteer Agreement which outlines the main features of the Scheme, what is expected from AWVs during their term of appointment and what they can expect from the OPCC in terms of support.

## **Accreditation**

Following successful completion of the recruitment and selection process, each appointment will be confirmed in writing by the Scheme Manager and provided with an identity card signed by the Chief Executive, showing the holder’s photograph.

The identity card will authorise the holder to enter appropriate police stations, dog vans and the dog kennels in Waterton, Bridgend, to undertake a visit in accordance with the Scheme. The pass should be worn visibly on the outer clothing when undertaking a visit.

AWVs identity cards should be used solely for the purpose of making visits/inspections. If anyone is found to be using their card for any other purpose, it will be withdrawn and that person’s appointment as an AVB may be terminated.

Each appointed AWV will receive a handbook containing details of the Scheme together with a contact list for all other Scheme members, Dog Section and OPCC contacts, a list of dog handlers and their dogs.

## **Training**

* **One Day Training Course**

Upon being invited to join the Scheme and prior to commencing duties, AWVs will be invited by the OPCC to attend a one-day information/training session. It will provide AWVs with the basic knowledge and skills they will need to make visits.

* **Training Accompanied Visits**

Newly appointed AWVs are expected to be accompanied by an AWV for at least their first two visits as part of their training.

* **Training Seminars as appropriate**

When a need is identified, training seminars will be held at Police Headquarters to update AWVs on activities within the dog section and address any issues affecting the work of the dog section. AWVs will be expected to attend Animal Welfare meetings to receive refresher training as appropriate, during their period of appointment.

## **Probationary Period**

Newly appointed AWVs will be expected to satisfactorily complete a probationary period (normally six months). Successful completion of the six-month probationary period will be confirmed in writing. The OPCC reserves the right to extend the probationary period if deemed necessary

## **Tenure**

Having successfully completed the six-month probationary period, a permanent appointment will be offered for a pre-determined period of time. This will usually be for three years from the start of their trial period, however this period may be shortened or extended as deemed necessary by the Police and Crime Commissioner.

AWVs can serve a maximum of two terms (six years) to ensure the Scheme retains its independence. However, AWVs are welcome to reapply following a three-year break. The Police and Crime Commissioner reserves the right, in exceptional circumstances, to extend a period of appointment (with the individual’s agreement) beyond the six-year term. This may be done to retain particular skills within the Scheme or to provide continuity.

## **Termination of Appointment of Animal Welfare AWVs**

Although the role is entirely voluntary, the OPCC has the right to terminate the appointment of any AWV whose conduct is not felt to be of the expected standard.

AWVs should notify the OPCC if they are arrested and charged with a criminal offence or under investigation for any animal welfare issue. They will be suspended from undertaking further visits, pending the outcome of any criminal proceedings.

In the event of misconduct, the OPCC will consider whether to withdraw the accreditation of any AWV. Misconduct will encompass matters such as misuse of the identity card, conviction for a criminal offence involving cruelty to animals or abusing one’s position as a AWV e.g. by consistently flouting the guidelines covering the conduct of AWVs during visits.

Where a AWV fails to make a visit or does not attend at least one Scheme meeting within 12 months, the Scheme Manager will write to the person concerned to seek an explanation. In the absence of good reason, the Gwent OPCC will consider whether that person’s accreditation should be revoked.

# **CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR ROLES**

## **Chair of Animal Welfare Scheme**

The Animal Welfare Scheme will be chaired by a AWV who has expressed an interest in carrying out the role. The individual with the highest number of votes will become Chair for a period of 1 year, however, the length of time a person can Chair the meeting is unlimited subject to successful annual election. If the Chair nominates themselves, it has to be seconded by another member and then voted on by the whole meeting. Only in exceptional circumstances will a member of OPCC staff undertake the role of Chair.

The role of the Chair will be to Chair all meetings, ensuring that they run to time. The Chair will be expected to ensure their own familiarity with all concerns and trends identified by AWVs during the preceding period to the meeting and be able to constructively bring these to the attention of the Scheme Administrator in advance of meetings.

The Scheme Chair will be expected to scrutinise responses given to any queries raised at meetings or as a result of matters detailed on report forms.

The Chair and Vice Chair will be expected to assist in the recruitment and selection of new AWVs.

At all times, the Chair will be expected to keep a regular dialogue with the Scheme Manager on all other matters including identified training requirements, conduct of colleagues, rota allocation etc.

## **Vice Chair of Animal Welfare Scheme**

A Vice Chair will be selected following an expression of interest in carrying out the role and supported by a nomination from another Scheme member. The individual with the highest number of votes will become Vice Chair for a period of 1 year and may carry on in that role, subject to successful annual election.

The role of the Vice Chair will be to deputise for the Chair in their absence, fulfilling all the duties required of them.

The Animal Welfare Vice Chair will be expected to assist in scrutinising responses given to any queries raised at meetings or as a result of matters detailed on report forms.

The Chair and Vice Chair will be expected to assist in the recruitment and selection of new AWVs.

# **VISITING ARRANGEMENTS**

## **Number of Animal Welfare AWVs**

The Gwent OPCC will appoint sufficient AWVs to ensure that appropriate numbers of random visits are made to check the welfare of all Gwent Police dogs.

## **Authorised AWVs**

AWVs are required to visit in pairs and under no circumstances should they be accompanied by any unauthorised persons. No more than two animal AWVs should visit together (unless previously agreed with the OPCC and dog handler), as larger parties could constitute an additional burden on police staff.

The timing of visits is a matter for individuals but visits must be undertaken in accordance with the rota issued by the OPCC. Care needs to be taken that visits, whilst sufficiently frequent to meet the objective of the Scheme, do not take place so frequently that they impair the efficiency and operational work of the police officers and police dogs concerned.

## **Visiting Procedures to Assess Police Dog’s Welfare**

All visits must be arranged via the dog section sergeant. The AWVs are to contact the dog section sergeant, to arrange appointments to meet the dog handlers in any of the police stations or training areas in Gwent It is necessary for AWVs to contact the dog section sergeant in advance of their planned visit to ensure the handler and dog(s) are available.

On arrival at the station or training area, AWVs should present their identity card and request to see the dog handler. The AWV should then be given immediate access to the dogs and their transport (if on site) to assess whether their welfare needs are being met.

If visiting is delayed, this will affect the credibility of the Scheme. Sufficient time must be given by AWVs to conduct a visit. It is recommended to allocate one hour per visit.

In circumstances where the dog handler does not attend the pre-arranged visit, it is advised that time to arrive should be allowed as they remain tactically/operationally available. The following waiting times are advised:

* Up to a 30 minute wait (acceptable)
* Over 30 minutes (postpone visit and inform the Scheme Manager who will ascertain an explanation from the dog section sergeant).

## **Access to all areas where animals are held, trained and transported.**

Gwent Police has joint access to the South Wales Police dog kennels and their facilities at Waterton, Bridgend. The South Wales Animal Welfare Scheme monitors the South Wales dog kennels and the dogs that are housed there. Gwent AWVs are not required to conduct visits to the South Wales Police dog kennels but have an open invite to visit and inspect the facilities should they wish when Gwent dogs are housed there for intermittent periods.

Visits are required to be pre-arranged by the AWV and the Dog Section Sergeant. The Scheme Manager is to be advised when a visit date has been agreed.

On attendance at the kennels, AWVs should satisfy themselves that the areas are clean, tidy, in a reasonable state of repair and that bedding is clean and adequate. It is not necessary to inspect stores, but AWVs should establish that suitable arrangements exist for adequate stocks of equipment and food. Inspections should also be undertaken of empty kennels to check they are in an acceptable condition to house the animals.

Close liaison with the South Wales Animal Welfare Scheme will provide additional reassurance.

## **Security and Safety of Animal Welfare AWVs**

AWVs must adhere to advice given by dog handlers and other staff with regard to any health and safety issues.

## **Medical Conditions of Animals**

AWVs will wish to pay particular attention to any animal suffering from illness, injury or disability. They should satisfy themselves that, if appropriate, a veterinarian has been informed and establish what instructions for medical treatment have been given and whether they have been carried out.

## **Frequency and Timing of Visits**

It is an expectation of the Scheme that all Gwent Police dogs receive at least one visit in a twelve-month period.

# **CONDUCT OF VISITS**

When conducting a visit, the AWVs will, at all times, be accompanied by a dog handler or a member of staff from the dog section. AWVs must adhere to advice given by dog handlers or police staff with regard to any health and safety issues. AWVs will not normally be entitled to visit officers’ private residences to inspect kennel facilities, but in exceptional circumstances, a AWV may be asked to accompany a police officer to a dog handler’s home – see ‘Police Initiated Visits’ section. However, the AWVs may wish to bring to the attention of the dog section sergeant any concerns they may have regarding a particular animal. The dog section sergeant will then take the appropriate action in relation to inspecting kennels maintained at a dog handler’s home. Following consultation with that AWV, the officer in charge will submit a full report to the OPCC.

Should an AWV have concerns regarding the identity of a particular dog, the AWV may request that the dog’s electronic tag is scanned. This must be done in the presence of the AWV. Any discrepancies must be immediately reported to the OPCC so this can be explored further with Gwent Police.

# **POLICE INITIATED VISITS**

Exceptional circumstances may arise where the police will wish to initiate a visit by an AWV (including at a dog handler’s home address), 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 dog section sergeant will be responsible on these occasions for contacting the OPCC who will contact an appropriate AWV to arrange 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 AWVs qualified in animal welfare. This would include allegations in relation to an Officer’s home address.

# **COMPLETION OF REPORTS AND FOLLOW UP ACTION**

## **Completion of reports**

At the conclusion of each visit, the AWVs will be required to complete a report form. One form only is to be completed by both AWVs who are each able to sign the form together with the attending dog handler. All sections of the form must be completed accurately, or they will be returned to the AWV by the OPCC for completion.

Reports will be submitted to the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent for discussion with the Chief Constable as deemed necessary.

## **Reports on unsatisfactory treatment and conditions during visits**

If a visit finds the treatment of dogs or conditions at the station/in the vehicle which are unsatisfactory, they should be included on the report and raised with the dog handler at the time. Any action which s/he takes should also be recorded on the report form.

## **Reports on issues arising out of visits**

Issues arising from visits must be submitted to the OPCC. Feedback of actions taken to resolve matters arising from visits will be provided at Scheme meetings.

## **Reporting and escalation procedure**

AWVs with any comments or suggestions relating to the Scheme or the welfare of the dogs should follow the following reporting procedure:



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## **10.5 Animal Welfare Scheme Meetings**

The OPCC will call regular meetings of the Scheme to allow the discussion of visiting arrangements and any concerns to be brought to the attention of Gwent Police or the OPCC. It is expected that AWVs attend all panel meetings but it is essential that at least one meeting every 12 months is attended or a AWVs appointment to the Scheme will be reviewed and possibly terminated.

# **EXPENSES**

The work of an AWV AWV is entirely voluntary although travel expenses can be paid to all AWVs when travelling on OPCC business. Only public transport fares or private car mileage at the agreed rate will be reimbursed. Reimbursement of taxi fares will not be paid apart from in certain justifiable circumstances e.g. disabled AWVs requiring particular accessible transport. Expenses can also be claimed for attending training sessions. All travel expense payments are at the discretion of the Chief Executive of the OPCC and must be made on the appropriate form, supported by receipts where appropriate. Expenses must be submitted within 3 months or they will not be paid.

AWVs who receive state benefits of any kind including job seekers allowance, housing benefit, disability living allowance or income support should notify the Department for Work and Pensions or relevant authority of their role as a volunteer for the OPCC.

# **INSURANCE**

The OPCC will arrange appropriate public and employer’s liability insurance AWVs to cover them during visits to a police station/Headquarters. It is emphasised, however, that this does not extend to motor insurance cover and AWVs making use of their own private vehicles when visiting stations on official business are strongly advised to check with their own insurers that they are covered for this purpose.

# **PUBLICITY AND SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES**

## **Publicity and the Press**

It is generally desirable that the role and aims of the Scheme should be promoted to the public. AWVs must, however, 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, or local groups or organisations about any aspect of Animal Welfare Visiting should be referred to the OPCC and should not be undertaken by individual AWVs, except at the request of or with the consent of the OPCC.

AWVs should remember that they are accountable to the OPCC, and not to the press or individual members of the public.

## **Social Media Policy**

AWVs are not to post on any social media platforms under their remit as an Animal Welfare Volunteer unless previously agreed with the Scheme Manager. This includes the posting of any photos or tweets relating to visits or issues raised as a result of a visit.

# **SCHEME GUIDELINES**

A copy of these guidelines is available from the OPCC on request.

# **DISPOSING OF DOCUMENTATION**

At the termination of their agreement, AWVs must ensure that the documentation relating to their role is returned to the Scheme Manager and in particular all report forms and any personal notes relating to them.

# **CONFIDENTIALITY**

During the course of their duties, AWVs may acquire confidential information about police issues, and AWVs will therefore be asked to sign an undertaking of confidentiality. AWVs should be aware that the improper disclosure of information acquired during a visit may attract civil or criminal proceedings

Should an AWV receive information or a complaint in confidence regarding the welfare of a particular dog, this information should be forwarded immediately to the OPCC who will take appropriate actions in respect of the concerns raised.

Other AWVs’ names, addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses are given to each AWV in the strictest confidence and are given purely for convenience in making contact to undertake visits. Such details should not be divulged to any other person.

Any information personal in nature must be treated in accordance with Data Protection Act 2018.

# **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIVERSITY**

The OPCC is firmly committed to equality and diversity in all areas of its work. We believe that diversity will make our organisation more effective in meeting the needs of all our stakeholders. We are committed to developing and maintaining an organisation in which differing ideas, abilities and backgrounds are fostered and valued. The OPCC regularly evaluates and monitors progress towards diversity of the Scheme.

# **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 imposes a duty on every employer “to ensure, as far as reasonably practical, that persons not in their employment, who may be affected by their undertaking, are not exposed to risks to their health and safety” and “to give information as might affect their health and safety”.

To ensure compliance with its statutory duties, the OPCC will provide each AWV with health and safety advice as part of their initial training.

# **COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE POLICE**

## **Against Police**

Where an AWV makes a complaint against the police, whether in their role as an AWV, or as a private individual, the Scheme Manager must be informed. The full details will then be put to the Chief Executive who will take the initial decision on whether the duties of the AWV should be suspended or curtailed in the interest of impartiality.

##  **Against Animal Welfare AWVs**

Complaints made against AWVs by police personnel, AWVs or others will be dealt with in accordance with the OPCC’s complaints procedure. A complaint should be made in writing and sent to the Scheme Manager who will raise the matter with the Head of Assurance and Compliance to investigate further.

**Document Control**

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