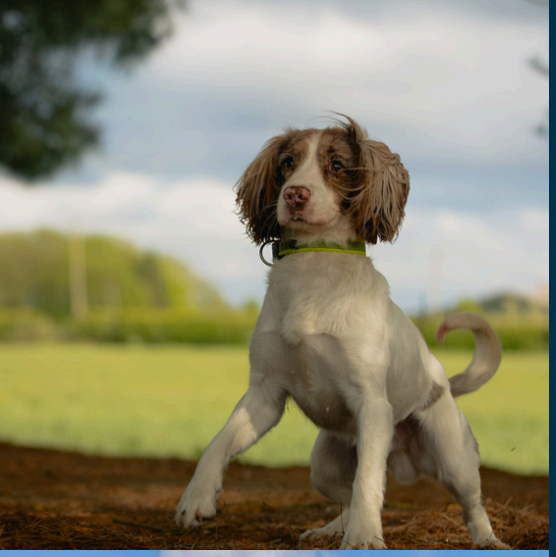








MATT STOREY
POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR CLEVELAND

ANIMAL WELFARE INDEPENDENT VISITOR SCHEME

ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26

MATT STOREY
POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR CLEVELAND

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Foreword from the Police and Crime Commissioner



The welfare of all police dogs must be at the forefront of every decision made about their care, training and deployment. That equally applies when they are on – or off – duty. This independent scheme aims to build confidence – and understanding – of the way, in which Cleveland Police looks after its dogs. It aims to show that we truly value our canine coppers.

I would like to thank the support provided by the Dogs Trust, the open and transparent approach taken by Cleveland Police's Dog Section in assisting the volunteers and of course the time and dedication shown to the scheme by our invaluable volunteers, without which we wouldn't be able to participate and check on the welfare of our police dogs

Matt Storey
Police and Crime Commissioner

Introduction

Independent Animal Welfare Volunteers provide scrutiny of the care and treatment of police dogs. They make sure procedures are ethical, humane and transparent in accordance with the Animal Welfare Act 2006. The scheme is to enable Independent Animal Welfare Volunteers to observe, comment and report on the conditions, in which police dogs are housed, trained and transported. It aims to secure greater understanding of, and confidence in, the handling and care of dogs in the police service.

The welfare scheme covers everyone who interacts with the dog. That includes trainers and handlers. It covers everywhere police dogs go including dog units, kennels and police vehicles.

Independent Animal Welfare Volunteers inspect dogs' training facilities, housing and transport to ensure they meet animal welfare standards.

The Five Welfare Standards are documented in legislation for England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. For England and Wales, guidelines are based on Section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006. They include the following areas of need:

1. A suitable environment;
2. Suitable diet;
3. The ability to exhibit normal behaviour patterns;
4. To be housed with, or apart from – other animals; and
5. To be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

Independent Animal Welfare Volunteers generally carry out visits in pairs. They are always accompanied by a dog handler or a member of staff from the Force's Dog Support Unit.

All of our volunteers took part in an informative training day which was facilitated by Louise Crawford from the Dogs Trust and the Cleveland Police Dog Section. Which covered the five welfare needs of dogs, what to look out for when assessing the service, a demonstration of the dogs' capabilities and a tour of the facility.

This report provides the key findings from visits which took place in November 2025, January 2026, April 2026, June 2026, and September 2026.

Visit Date – 3 November 2025

Overall finding: The visit presents a very positive assessment of the dog unit's welfare standards. Across all three documents there were no recorded failures and no significant welfare concerns identified.

The visit found that:

- Dogs are housed in clean, safe and appropriately maintained kennels
- Welfare monitoring systems are in place and records are maintained.
- Dogs have access to exercise, enrichment, social interaction and opportunities to rest.
- Positive reward-based training methods are being used.
- Dogs appear healthy and veterinary arrangements are in place.
- Vehicle transport arrangements meet welfare requirements and appear well maintained.

Key Findings by Theme

1. Kennel Environment - The kennel visit found the accommodation to be:

- Safe and free from hazards.
- Clean, dry and appropriately maintained.
- Temperature controlled and ventilated.
- Large enough for dogs to move comfortably and rest appropriately.
- Equipped with indoor and outdoor areas, giving dogs choice and flexibility.
- Supported by exercise compounds and enrichment spaces.



Key Finding:

That all dogs were being checked twice daily, providing reassurance around ongoing welfare monitoring. The physical kennel environment exceed expected welfare standards.

2. Welfare Monitoring and Record Keeping – References were made to welfare records being maintained and that.

- Welfare records were available to view.
- Records were held on police systems and were also viewed.
- Health and behavioural monitoring was undertaken.
- Veterinary and vaccination records were available.



Key Finding:

There appears to be a structured and documented approach to dog welfare management.

3. Diet, Hydration and Feeding – Animal Welfare Visitors found:

- Fresh drinking water available.
- Feeding arrangements in place.
- Body condition scores appeared healthy.
- Feeding information available for staff notification on the needs of each dog.
- Veterinary oversight available for special dietary needs.



Key Finding:
There were no concerns were identified regarding nutrition, hydration or feeding practices.

4. Behaviour, Enrichment and Exercise - A particularly strong theme across the visits is the emphasis on behavioural welfare. Evidence was found that dogs:

- Receive daily exercise.
- Are provided with enrichment activities.
- Have opportunities for natural behaviour such as sniffing and play.
- Receive social interaction.
- Have opportunities to rest undisturbed.
- Positive reinforcement methods are used.
- Reward-based training practices are adopted.
- Behavioural referral routes exist if specialist support is required.



Key Finding:
The visit indicates compliance with modern animal welfare principles and approved police dog training practices.

5. Health and Veterinary Care
The welfare and out-of-kennel visits found:

- Dogs appeared in good health.
- Daily health monitoring takes place.
- Coat condition was healthy.
- Veterinary contact details were available.
- Vaccination and parasite treatment records were maintained.



Key Finding:
There is strong evidence of proactive veterinary and healthcare management

6. Transport and Vehicle Welfare - The vehicle visit identified:

- Clean kennel compartments.
- Appropriate size for dogs.
- Ventilation and temperature control systems check and working.
- Working air conditioning - Temperature was appropriate.
- Availability of fresh water - Water and bowls were available at all times.
- Canine first aid provision available.
- Appropriate bedding available.
- Safe transportation arrangements.
- Equipment maintained in good condition -Leads and collars were in good condition

Key Finding:
Vehicle welfare arrangements appear comprehensive and compliant with expected standards.

Areas for Improvement

No significant areas of concern were recorded. However, from a governance perspective, it was identified that the report forms could be consolidated to assist with being able to add examples of good practice. Forms were then amended with volunteers input and approval.



Overall Conclusion

The findings provide strong evidence that the police dog unit was operating to a high standard of animal welfare at the time of the visit. The Animal Welfare Visitors found appropriate accommodation, effective welfare monitoring, good health management, positive training methods and safe transport arrangements. No material welfare concerns, compliance failures or areas requiring immediate corrective action were identified. The overall outcome is one of substantial assurance that dogs were being cared for appropriately and in accordance with the Dogs Trust and Animal Welfare Independent Visitors Scheme standards.

Visit Date – 13 January 2026

Overall finding: The visit provides very strong assurance regarding the welfare, management and operational care of Cleveland Police dogs. The visit documented almost universal compliance with welfare requirements and there were no significant welfare concerns, adverse findings or recommendations for remedial action.

The visit found evidence that:

- Dogs are kept in safe, clean and appropriately designed environments.
- Welfare monitoring systems are in place and supported by documented records.
- Positive reinforcement training methods are used.
- Dogs receive exercise, enrichment and opportunities to exhibit natural behaviours.
- Veterinary arrangements, health monitoring and vaccination records are maintained.
- Police dog vehicles meet expected welfare and transportation standards.

Key Findings by Theme

1. Kennel and Accommodation Standards - The welfare visit found that dogs were housed in environments that were:

- Safe and free from hazards.
- Clean, dry and protected from adverse weather.
- Adequately ventilated and temperature controlled.
- Large enough for dogs to move freely and rest comfortably.
- Supported by access to dedicated exercise and enrichment compounds.
- Provided with separate toilet areas away from bedding.



Key Finding:

The physical accommodation provided a high standard of welfare provision with no environmental concerns identified. The visit also confirmed that dogs had access to both indoor and outdoor areas, supporting welfare and behavioural choice.

2. Welfare Governance and Record Keeping - One of the strongest themes within the welfare check is the presence of established governance arrangements. Animal Welfare Visitors repeatedly identified evidence through:

- Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).
- PD Pals records and welfare monitoring systems.
- Veterinary records were available and up to date.
- Behaviour and training monitoring records were viewed.



Key Finding:
The dog unit demonstrates mature governance arrangements with clear evidence trails supporting welfare management.

3. Diet, Hydration and Nutrition - Animal Welfare Visitors found evidence that:

- Fresh drinking water was available.
- Dogs were maintained at healthy body condition scores.
- Feeding arrangements were governed by procedures and guidance.
- Records existed to monitor eating and drinking patterns.
- Veterinary advice was available when dietary needs changed.



Key Finding:
Animal Welfare Visitors also recorded "recent evidence of dogs visiting vets", demonstrating active veterinary oversight. There were no concerns were identified in respect of feeding, hydration or nutritional management.

4. Behaviour, Training and Enrichment - Both visits identified strong evidence that welfare extends beyond basic care and encompasses behavioural wellbeing. Animal Welfare Visitors found that dogs:

- Receive opportunities for natural behaviours.
- Receive appropriate exercise.
- Are monitored for behavioural changes.
- Are trained using reward-based methods.
- Have access to appropriate behavioural referral processes where necessary.



Key Finding:

The Animal Welfare Visitors specifically noted that positive reinforcement approaches were being used in line with Approved Police Practice. There was strong evidence that welfare-focused and modern dog training principles are embedded within the unit.

5. Health and Veterinary Care - The visit found:

- Dogs appeared healthy.
- Coat condition was healthy and appropriately maintained.
- The veterinary records were viewed and shown to be maintained.
- Vaccination and parasite-treatment records were available.
- Daily health monitoring procedures existed.
- Vet contact details were accessible.
- Medication storage and administration procedures were documented.



Key Finding:

Health management arrangements appear robust, proactive and well documented.

6. Social Housing and Handling - Animal Welfare Visitors found that:

- Appropriate consideration is given to social interaction between dogs.
- Dogs sharing environments have sufficient space and resources.
- Staff demonstrate kind, gentle and stress-free handling techniques.



Key Finding:

There is evidence that dog handling practices prioritise welfare and minimise stress.

7. Vehicle Welfare and Transportation - The vehicle visit covered a number of operational dog vehicles and found:

- Vehicle kennel areas were clean and appropriately sized.
- Rubber matting was provided.
- Ventilation and temperature controls were in place and air-conditioning systems were working and serviced.
- Dogs were checked regularly during transport.
- Vehicles were secure and free from hazards.
- First aid equipment was available.
- Water, bedding, leads and equipment were available and in good condition.

Key Finding:
Vehicle transport arrangements provide strong assurance that dogs are transported safely and comfortably.



Areas for Improvement

No substantive welfare concerns, compliance issues or corrective actions were identified.

Overall Conclusion

The combined findings demonstrate a high level of compliance with the Animal Welfare Independent Visitors Scheme standards and provide substantial assurance regarding the welfare of Cleveland Police dogs. The visit found clean and safe accommodation, effective welfare monitoring, positive training practices, robust veterinary arrangements and well-maintained transport vehicles. There were no significant welfare concerns identified and no evidence requiring immediate intervention or remedial action. Overall, the visit presents a highly positive picture of the management, care and welfare of police dogs within the Cleveland Police Dog Unit.

Visit Date – 24 April 2026

Overall finding: The visit provided a very positive assessment of the welfare arrangements within the Cleveland Police Dog Training Unit. The Animal Welfare Visitors found comprehensive compliance across all welfare domains and recorded no significant concerns, deficiencies or recommendations for corrective action.

Key Findings by Theme

1. Kennel and Accommodation Standards - The visit found evidence that dogs were housed in environments that were:

- Safe and protected from hazards.
- Clean, dry and appropriately maintained.
- Ventilated and temperature controlled.
- Suitable for rest and recovery.
- Equipped with indoor and outdoor areas.
- Supported by dedicated toilet and exercise facilities.
- Large enough for dogs to move freely and comfortably.



Key Finding:

The accommodation appears well designed and managed, providing an environment that supports both physical welfare and behavioural wellbeing. The visit also confirmed access to secure compound areas that provide environmental enrichment and exercise opportunities.

2. Diet, Hydration and Nutrition - Animal Welfare Visitors recorded compliance across all dietary standards, including:

- Availability of fresh drinking water.
- Healthy body condition of dogs.
- Feeding schedules governed by Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).
- Veterinary escalation procedures for dietary issues.
- Monitoring of eating and drinking patterns through the PD Pals system.
- Availability of feeding instructions for staff.
- Evidence of veterinary involvement where specialist diets may be required.



Key Finding:

There is clear evidence of structured nutritional management supported by documented procedures and record keeping.

3. Behaviour, Training and Enrichment - The visit identified strong evidence that dogs were given opportunities to exhibit normal behaviours. Animal Welfare Visitors noted:

- Access to enrichment activities.
- Exercise opportunities.
- Rest periods free from disturbance.
- Daily monitoring of welfare and behaviour.
- Training and behavioural progress records.
- Positive reinforcement and reward-based training methods.
- Welfare concern reporting procedures.
- Access to behavioural referral arrangements through veterinary channels.



Key Finding:
The dog unit demonstrates a welfare-focused training culture that aligns with modern police dog handling standards and approved practice.

4. Social Housing and Handling Practices - The Animal Welfare Visitors found evidence that:

- Appropriate social housing considerations are made for individual dogs.
- Kennelled dogs have sufficient space when housed with others.
- Adequate resources are available for dogs who share environments.
- Staff demonstrate appropriate, kind and controlled handling methods.



Key Finding:
Handling and housing arrangements appear to prioritise welfare, minimise stress and support the needs of individual dogs.

5. Health and Veterinary Care - The visit provides substantial assurance regarding healthcare arrangements. Evidence was found that:

- Dogs appeared healthy.
- Daily health monitoring and behavioural monitoring records are maintained.
- Grooming arrangements are in place
- Veterinary health checks are recorded.
- Vaccination and parasite treatment records are maintained.
- Medication storage procedures exist.
- Medication administration is recorded through PD Pals.
- Veterinary emergency contact details are available.
- Equipment such as collars and harnesses are appropriately managed.



Key Finding:
Health management systems appear comprehensive, documented and subject to effective oversight.

6. Vehicle Welfare and Transportation - A vehicle visit was completed during the visit.
Animal Welfare Visitors found:

- Vehicle kennel compartments were clean.
- Kennels were appropriately sized.
- Rubber flooring was present.
- Ventilation and temperature controls were functioning.
- Air conditioning systems were operational.
- Dogs were subject to regular welfare checks during transport.
- Vehicle kennel areas were secure and free from hazards
- Transportation arrangements complied with welfare requirements.
- Canine first aid provision was available.
- Water was readily available.
- Leads and operational equipment were in good condition.
- Appropriate bedding was available.



Key Finding:
Vehicle welfare arrangements provide strong assurance that dogs are transported safely, comfortably and in accordance with expected standards.

Operational Assurance

Animal Welfare Visitors observed both dogs and training activity directly and expressed confidence in the welfare standards being applied.

Areas for Improvement

No substantive welfare concerns, compliance failures or recommendations for improvement were identified within the visit.

Overall Conclusion

The Animal Welfare Visit Form provides substantial assurance regarding police dog welfare within the Cleveland Police Dog Unit. Animal Welfare Visitors found clean and appropriate accommodation, strong welfare governance, effective health monitoring, positive training methods and well-maintained operational vehicles. The visit identified no welfare concerns, no vehicle deficiencies and no areas requiring remedial action. Overall, the report presents a highly positive picture of the care, management and welfare of police dogs and demonstrates compliance with the standards expected under the Animal Welfare Independent Visitors Scheme.

The concluding comments state:

"Great visit today as Cleveland dogs all good and we saw some training as well. Vehicle checks no fault on vehicle. All kit and water and Air-con were great, no concerns at all."



Visit Date – 29 June 2026

Overall finding: The visit provides a very positive assessment of welfare standards within the Cleveland Police Dog Unit. Animal Welfare Visitors found evidence of comprehensive compliance across all welfare domains, with no significant concerns, welfare issues, environmental deficiencies or vehicle-related problems identified.

The visit concluded that there were no concerns regarding animal welfare, training arrangements, kennels, vehicles or staff practices.

Key Findings by Theme

1. Kennel and Accommodation Standards - The welfare visit found that dogs were housed in environments that were:

- Safe and free from hazards.
- Clean, dry and protected from adverse weather.
- Adequately ventilated and temperature controlled.
- Of sufficient size to allow dogs to move and rest comfortably.
- Equipped with indoor and outdoor areas.
- Supported by dedicated exercise and enrichment compounds.
- Provided with appropriate toilet areas away from resting spaces.



Key Finding:
The physical environment appears well maintained and designed to support both welfare and operational requirements

2. Welfare Monitoring and Governance - The visit found strong evidence of established welfare governance arrangements. Animal Welfare Visitors identified:

- Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) governing welfare processes.
- Use of the PD Pals system for welfare and health monitoring.
- Daily welfare checks.
- Recording of behavioural observations.
- Monitoring of training and welfare needs.



Key Finding:
There is clear evidence of structured welfare oversight supported by documented systems and routine monitoring. "All dogs seem to be very happy and free from distress.

3. Diet, Hydration and Nutrition -Animal Welfare Visitors found that:

- Fresh drinking water was available.
- Dogs appeared to maintain healthy body condition scores.
- Procedures existed for veterinary dietary advice.
- Feeding practices were governed by SOPs.
- Eating and drinking patterns were monitored through PD Pals records.
- Feeding guidance was available to handlers.



Key Finding:
Nutrition and hydration arrangements appear well managed with effective oversight and record keeping.

4. Behaviour, Training and Enrichment - The visit identified strong evidence of positive behavioural welfare. Animal Welfare Visitors found that dogs:

- Receive enrichment opportunities.
- Are given opportunities for natural behaviours such as exercise, exploration and play.
- Have periods of uninterrupted rest.
- Are monitored for health and behavioural changes.
- Have training and behavioural progress documented.
- Are handled using reward-based methods consistent with Approved Police Practice.



Key Finding:
The visit demonstrates a positive welfare culture where training effectiveness and animal welfare appear to be closely aligned.

5. Social Housing and Dog Handling - The visit found evidence that:

- Appropriate consideration is given to dogs' social needs.
- Dogs housed together have sufficient space and resources.
- Appropriate toys, bedding, food and water resources are provided.
- Dogs are handled in a calm, kind and professional manner.



Key Finding:
There is evidence that staff understand and apply welfare-focused handling practices that minimise stress and support good behavioural outcomes.

6. Health and Veterinary Care - The Animal Welfare Visitors found:

- Dogs appeared healthy.
- Daily health monitoring records were maintained.
- Behavioural monitoring records were maintained.
- Veterinary health checks were recorded.
- Vaccination and parasite treatment records were maintained.
- Emergency veterinary contact details were available.
- Medication management procedures existed where required.
- Appropriate collars, tags and harnesses were available and maintained.



Key Finding:

The visit provides substantial assurance regarding health care, veterinary oversight and record management.

7. Vehicle Welfare and Transportation - A dedicated vehicle visit was completed covering a Skoda Superb police dog vehicle. - Animal Welfare Visitors found:

- Vehicle kennel compartments were clean.
- Kennels were suitably sized.
- Rubber flooring was fitted.
- Ventilation and temperature controls were functioning effectively.
- Air-conditioning systems were working correctly.
- Dogs were regularly monitored during transportation.
- Transport arrangements were safe and compliant with welfare requirements.
- Canine first aid equipment was available.
- Water was available "at all times".
- Leads and operational equipment were in good condition.
- Appropriate bedding was provided.



Key Finding:

Key finding - The vehicle visit identified no concerns and provided strong assurance that police dogs are transported safely and comfortably.

Highly Positive Independent Visitor Feedback

The strongest theme within the visit is the highly positive feedback provided by the independent visitors. Comments included:

- "Today's visit was fantastic."
- Praise for the facilities and welfare standards
- Positive observations of training practices
- Positive comments regarding staff professionalism
- No welfare concerns identified

Strong Welfare Culture

Evidence was identified of:

- Reward-based training
- Welfare-focused management
- Good health monitoring
- Effective record keeping
- Veterinary oversight
- Proactive dog care

Effective Leadership and Support

Animal Welfare Visitors positively referenced discussions with unit staff and management and recorded their appreciation for the information and support provided during the visit.

Areas for Improvement

No welfare concerns, compliance issues or corrective actions were identified. The visit contains no recommendations and no recorded deficiencies requiring management attention.

Overall Conclusion

The visit provides substantial assurance regarding the welfare, training, management and transportation of Cleveland Police dogs. Animal Welfare Visitors found high standards of accommodation, comprehensive welfare monitoring, strong veterinary oversight, positive training practices and well-maintained operational vehicles. The report contains no material concerns and no recommendations for improvement, concluding with exceptionally positive feedback about the professionalism of staff, the quality of facilities and the welfare of the dogs. Overall, the visit presents a highly favourable assessment of the Cleveland Police Dog Unit and its compliance with the standards of the Animal Welfare Independent Visitors Scheme.



The concluding comments state:

"Today's visit was fantastic" and that they were impressed by both the facilities and welfare standards observed."

Visit Date – 1 September 2026

Overall finding: The visit provides strong assurance that police dog welfare arrangements remain effective and well managed. The majority of visit criteria were fully met, demonstrating high standards of care, documentation and operational practice. Unlike some earlier visits, Animal Welfare Visitors did identify a small number of facility-related observations and recommendations for improvement. These were not welfare concerns affecting the dogs directly but related to infrastructure upgrades and environmental enhancements. Overall, Animal Welfare Visitors expressed confidence in the professionalism of staff, the welfare of the dogs and the management of the unit.

Key Findings by Theme

1. Kennel and Accommodation Standards - The visit found that:
   - Dogs were housed in safe environments free from hazards.
   - Kennels were clean, dry and appropriately maintained.
   - Environmental conditions were appropriately ventilated and temperature controlled.
   - Dogs had access to indoor and outdoor areas.
   - Toilet areas were separated from bedding areas.
   - Kennels provided sufficient space for movement and rest.
   - Suitable exercise and enrichment compounds were available.



Key Finding:
The visit provides assurance that accommodation remains compliant with welfare standards and supports the physical and behavioural needs of the dogs

2. Diet, Hydration and Nutrition - Animal Welfare Visitors found evidence that:
   - Fresh drinking water was available.
   - Dogs maintained healthy body condition scores.
   - Feeding arrangements were governed through Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).
   - Veterinary escalation procedures were documented.
   - Eating and drinking patterns were recorded through the PD Pals system.
   - Dietary information was accessible to handlers.



Key Finding:
Nutritional management appears well documented and effectively monitored.

3. Behaviour, Training and Enrichment - The visit found evidence that dogs:

- Receive environmental, social and activity-based enrichment.
- Are exercised regularly.
- Have opportunities to display natural behaviours.
- Have periods of uninterrupted rest.
- Are monitored for behavioural changes.
- Are trained using positive reinforcement methods consistent with Approved Police Practice.
- Benefit from documented behavioural referral arrangements.



Key Finding:
The dog unit continues to demonstrate a welfare-led training culture with strong behavioural monitoring processes.

4. Social Housing and Handling - Animal Welfare Visitors found:

- Appropriate social housing assessments are undertaken.
- Dogs kennelled together have adequate space.
- Dogs sharing accommodation have sufficient resources available. Dogs housed together have their own space and resources available.
- Staff demonstrate appropriate and welfare-focused handling techniques.



Key Finding:
Handling and housing arrangements were assessed positively, with no concerns regarding social welfare.

5. Health and Veterinary Care -The visit found substantial evidence of effective health management, including:

- Dogs appearing healthy and well cared for.
- Daily monitoring for illness, injury and behavioural changes.
- Veterinary health records maintained through PD Pals.
- Vaccination and parasite treatment records available.
- Grooming arrangements in place.
- Veterinary emergency contact details accessible.
- Appropriate management of collars, tags and harnesses.



Key Finding:
Health care arrangements appear robust, well documented and supported by effective record keeping systems.

6. Vehicle Welfare and Transportation - The vehicle visit covered a Volvo dog vehicle carrying dogs including Tank and Frankie.

- Vehicle kennels were clean.
- Kennels were suitably sized.
- Rubber flooring was fitted.
- Temperature control and ventilation arrangements were available.
- Air conditioning systems were in place.
- Dogs were monitored during transport.
- Vehicle kennels were secure and free from hazards.
- Transportation arrangements complied with welfare expectations.
- Water was available within the vehicle.
- Leads and operational equipment were maintained appropriately
- Suitable bedding was available



Key Finding:
Vehicle welfare arrangements continue to provide strong assurance regarding safe transportation of police dogs.

Areas for Improvement

- Rubber Matting Replacement - Animal Welfare Visitors noted that some kennel rubber matting was becoming worn and recommended replacement.
- Human Welfare Facilities - The report recommends improvements to staff welfare facilities, specifically replacing or upgrading seating within the building.
- Noise Reduction - Animal Welfare Visitors suggested that reducing noise levels where possible could further benefit police dog welfare.
- Facility Refurbishment - The report references ongoing improvements and recommends consideration of further refurbishment and modernisation where resources allow. Importantly, these observations relate to infrastructure enhancement rather than concerns about animal welfare compliance.

Overall Conclusion

The visit provides substantial assurance regarding the welfare, management and care of Cleveland Police dogs. Animal Welfare Visitors found high standards of accommodation, health management, behavioural welfare, training practices and transportation arrangements. While a small number of improvement opportunities were identified relating to facilities and environmental enhancements, there were no significant welfare concerns, no evidence of poor practice and no issues requiring urgent intervention.

Overall, the report presents a strongly positive assessment of the Cleveland Police Dog Unit, demonstrating continued compliance with the standards expected under the Animal Welfare Independent Visitors Scheme, alongside a commitment to continuous improvement.

Conclusion

Consistent Strengths

- No significant welfare concerns identified during any visit.
- No visit recorded any "No" ratings against welfare criteria.
- Positive reinforcement training methods were consistently observed.
- Dogs consistently appeared healthy and well cared for.
- Veterinary care arrangements were robust and well documented.
- PD Pals and SOPs provided a strong governance framework.
- Vehicle visits consistently identified compliant and well-maintained transport arrangements.
- Independent visitors repeatedly praised staff professionalism and engagement.

Areas Most Frequently Highlighted

Theme	Frequency Mentioned
Welfare Monitoring	★★★★★
Positive Training Methods	★★★★★
Veterinary Oversight	★★★★★
Record Keeping (PD Pals/SOPs)	★★★★★
Safe Kennel Environment	★★★★★
Vehicle Standards	★★★★★
Staff Professionalism	★★★★★

Emerging Themes

Visits from 2025 to Mid-2026

The visits were almost entirely assurance-focused, with Animal Welfare Visitors identifying:

- Good welfare practice
- Effective governance
- Strong animal health management
- Safe and well-maintained facilities
- No recommendations requiring action

Visit in September 2026

The visit moved beyond compliance and identified opportunities for enhancement of the facilities rather than any compliance issues Animal Welfare Visitors were clear that these were infrastructure improvements rather than welfare deficiencies.:

- Replacement of worn kennel matting
- Improvements to staff welfare seating
- Noise reduction measures
- Consideration of future refurbishment and modernisation

Overall Assessment

Overall Assessment	
Animal Welfare Compliance	100%
Kennel Welfare	100%
Health & Veterinary Care	100%
Training & Behaviour	100%
Record Keeping & Governance	100%
Vehicle Welfare	100%

Conclusion

All five visit demonstrated a consistently high-performing Police Dog Unit with strong welfare governance, effective health management, positive training practices and high-quality accommodation and transport arrangements. The visits showed sustained compliance with the Animal Welfare Independent Visitors Scheme standards, with later visits moving towards continuous improvement recommendations rather than identifying welfare risks.

Overall Assurance Rating

SUBSTANTIAL ASSURANCE (HIGH CONFIDENCE)
There is strong evidence that welfare arrangements are embedded, well governed and consistently applied across the Cleveland Police Dog Unit.



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