

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

**ANIMAL WELFARE VISITOR SCHEME  
HANDBOOK**

**(Revised 2019)**

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

## **GWENT ANIMAL WELFARE SCHEME**

### **2 FOREWORD**

This handbook has been designed to help Animal Welfare Visitors 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 Administrator: on 01633 642200.

### **3 BACKGROUND TO THE SCHEME**

The death of a police dog 'Acer' whilst in training in Essex, 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 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 Gwent Animal Welfare 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 Gwent Animal Welfare Scheme and maintain its scrutiny role under the remit of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Animal Welfare Visitors are independent members of the local community who will visit police dog training centres and police stations with little prior notice to check on the welfare of animals engaged in police work. As Gwent has no kennels visits are pre-arranged with officers to meet Animal Welfare Visitors with their police dogs at specific locations within Gwent so that both the vehicle and dogs can be checked together. Animal Welfare Visitors may be periodically accompanied by professionals from animal welfare organisations. They 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.

### **4 ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SCHEME**

The Animal Welfare 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 Administrator"). 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 Administrator will be responsible for any serious complaints or grievances raised against any Scheme members or by Scheme members.

The role of the Scheme Administrator 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 Animal Welfare Visitors.
- Conduct reviews on a 3 yearly basis with individual Animal Welfare Visitors.
- To process all HR related paperwork to ensure Animal Welfare Visitors are fully compliant e.g. vetting up to date, volunteer agreements signed
- Write to Animal Welfare Visitors to notify them of any changes in circumstances

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

- Drafting and circulating meeting agendas in liaison with the Scheme Administrator, Chair and Vice Chair.
- Drafting and circulating meeting minutes.

## **5 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 Animal Welfare Visitors.

## **6 ANIMAL WELFARE VISITORS**

### **6.1 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 Animal Welfare Visitor. Subject to being able to obtain appropriate insurance cover there will be no maximum age limit.

Visitors 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 punishable with imprisonment within the last five years, or who has ever 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 will 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 Gwent OPCC will not appoint Magistrates, serving or former police officers, special constables or police staff as Animal Welfare Visitors. Other persons may be considered unsuitable after discussion with the individual applicant, if they have a direct involvement in the criminal justice system such as Solicitors or Probation Officers.

Each application will be treated on its own merits, but the over-riding factor will be to prevent possible conflicts of interest for individuals and to maintain the independence and integrity of the Scheme as a whole.

## **6.2 Recruitment**

The Gwent OPCC will seek to recruit Animal Welfare Visitors 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 visitors 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 the Gwent OPCC policies.

## **6.3. Application Process**

Interested parties will be sent an application pack containing background information about the Animal Welfare Scheme. All applicants will be asked to include on their application forms details of any convictions.

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

## **6.4 Selection**

Applicants will be invited to attend an interview conducted by representatives of the Gwent OPCC. Apart from the RSPCA representatives nominated by the RSPCA, all persons shall be appointed as an Animal Welfare Visitor via an interview process.

Following the interviews, a final decision will be made by the interviewing panel as to who should be appointed. This will be reported to the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent, after which candidates will be notified.

## **6.5 Appointment and vetting**

Following notification of their appointment it will be outlined that this is subject to completion of vetting to the Non-Police Persons Vetting level. Outcomes of such checks will assist in determining a person's suitability to the role. Each case, regardless of outcomes will be considered on its own merits.

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

## **6.6 Accreditation**

Following successful completion of the recruitment and selection process, each appointment will be confirmed in writing by the Scheme Administrator and provided with an identity card signed by the Chief Executive and 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 on police premises.

Animal Welfare Visitors' 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 Animal Welfare Visitor may be terminated.

Each appointed Animal Welfare Visitor 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.

## **6.7 Training**

### **❖ One Day Training Course**

Upon being invited to join the Animal Welfare Scheme and prior to commencing duties, Animal Welfare Visitors will be invited by the Gwent OPCC to attend a one-



day information/training session. It will provide Visitors with the basic knowledge and skills they will need to make visits. This training will outline the requirements and expectations of the role of an Animal Welfare Visitor with prospective Visitors being asked to sign a volunteer agreement that stipulates what duties are involved in the role.

#### ❖ **Training Accompanied Visits**

Animal Welfare Visitors are expected to be accompanied by an experienced Animal Welfare Visitor 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 Visitors on activities within the dog section and address any issues affecting the work of the dog section. Animal Welfare Visitors will be expected to attend Animal Welfare meetings to receive refresher training as appropriate, during their period of appointment.

### **6.8 Probationary Period**

Newly appointed Animal Welfare Visitors 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.

### **6.9 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.

Visitors can serve a maximum of two terms (six years) to ensure the Scheme retains its independence. However, they 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.

### **6.10 Termination of Appointment of Animal Welfare Visitors**

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

Animal Welfare Visitors should notify the Gwent 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 Gwent OPCC will consider whether to withdraw the accreditation of any Animal Welfare Visitor. 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 visitor e.g. by consistently flouting the guidelines covering the conduct of Animal Welfare Visitors during visits.

Where a Visitor fails to make a visit within 12 months, the Scheme Administrator 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.

## **7 CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR ROLES**

### **7.1 Chair of Animal Welfare Scheme**

The Animal Welfare Scheme will be chaired by a Visitor who has expressed an interest in carrying out the role and has been nominated by the another Scheme member. The individual with the highest number of votes will become Chair for a period of 1 year and may carry out up to 3 years in that role, subject to successful annual election.

The role of the Chair will be to Chair all meetings, ensuring that they run to time. Chairs will be expected to ensure their own familiarity with all concerns and trends identified by Visitors 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 Visitors.

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

### **7.2 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 out up to 3 years 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 Visitors, following their assistance in identifying reductions in the complement of volunteers within the Scheme area.

## **8 VISITING ARRANGEMENTS**

### **8.1 Number of Animal Welfare Visitors**

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

### **8.2 Authorised Visitors**

Visitors are required to visit in pairs and under no circumstances should they be accompanied by any unauthorised persons. No more than two animal welfare visitors should visit together, as larger parties could constitute an additional burden on police staff.

The frequency and timing of visits is a matter for individuals in accordance to 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.

### **8.3 Visiting Procedures to Assess Police Dog's Welfare**

All visits must be arranged via the dog section sergeant. The welfare visitors are to contact the dog section sergeant, to arrange random appointments to meet the dog handlers in any of the police stations in Gwent. It is necessary for visitors 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, visitors should present their identity card and request to see the dog handler. The Visitor 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 Visitors to conduct a visit. It is recommended to allocate one hour per visit.

In circumstances where no dog handler is in attendance, it is advised allowing them a short amount of time to arrive as they remain tactically/operationally available. The following waiting times are advised:

- Up to 15 minute wait (acceptable)
- 15-30 minutes (acceptable. If there is no other dog section officer at the venue, call the dog section sergeant on 01495 745392)
- Over 30 minutes (postpone visit and inform the Scheme Administrator who will ascertain an explanation from the dog section sergeant).

Due to the nature of the role of dog handlers, Gwent OPCC recognises that unannounced visits may not be the most productive method of checking on the welfare of the dog(s). As such, prior notice of up to 24 hours may be given to dog handlers to ensure they will be working during that period and that the dog(s) will be available for inspection.

#### **8.4 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 Animal Welfare Visitors 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 via the Scheme Administrator and Gwent Police dog sergeant.

On attendance at the kennels, Animal Welfare Visitor's 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 visitors 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.

#### **8.5 Security and Safety of Animal Welfare Visitors**

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

#### **8.6 Medical Conditions of Animals**

Visitors 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.

### **8.7 Frequency and Timing of Visits**

It is an expectation of the Scheme that all dog handlers receive at least one visit in a twelve month period.

## **9 CONDUCT OF VISITS**

When conducting a visit the Animal Welfare Visitors will, at all times, be accompanied by a dog handler or a member of staff from the dog section. Visitors must adhere to advice given by dog handlers or police staff with regard to any health and safety issues. Visitors will not normally be entitled to visit officers' private residences to inspect kennel facilities, but in exceptional circumstances, a visitor may be asked to accompany a police officer to a dog handler's home – see 'Police Initiated Visits' section. However, the Visitors 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 Visitor, the officer in charge will submit a full report to the Gwent OPCC.

Should an Animal Welfare Visitor have concerns regarding the identity of a particular dog, the Animal Welfare Visitor may request that the dog's electronic tag is scanned. This must be done in the presence of the Animal Welfare Visitor.

## **10 POLICE INITIATED VISITS**

Exceptional circumstances may arise where the police will wish to initiate a visit by an Animal Welfare Visitor (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 an appropriate visitor and arranging 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 Visitors qualified in animal welfare. This would include allegations in relation to an Officer's home address.

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

### **11.1 Completion of reports**

At the conclusion of each visit, the Animal Welfare Visitors will be required to complete a report form. One form only is to be completed by both visitors 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 Animal Welfare Visitor by the OPCC for completion. The copy should be sent to the OPCC who will photocopy it and forward a copy to Gwent Police dog section for their records.

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

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

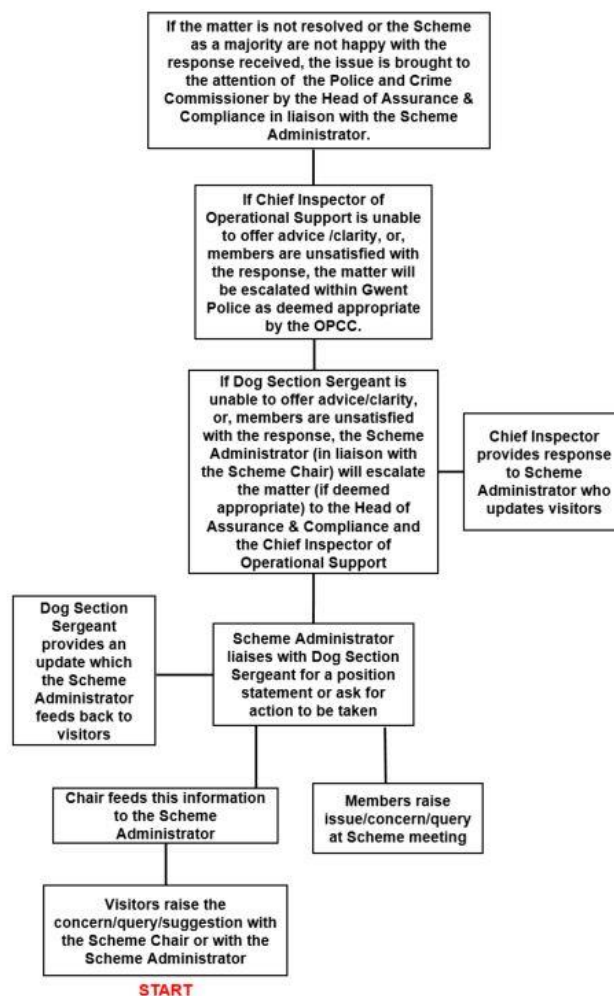
If a visit discloses any aspect of the treatment of dogs or conditions at the station which are unsatisfactory, they should be included on the report and raised with the dog handler at the time. Any action which s/he takes should also be recorded on the report form.

### 11.3 Reports on issues arising out of visits

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

### 11.4 Reporting and escalation procedure

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



### **11.5 Animal Welfare Visitors Panel**

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.

## **12 EXPENSES**

The work of an Animal Welfare Visitor is entirely voluntary although travel expenses can be paid to all visitors when travelling on OPCC business. Only public transport fares or private car mileage at the agreed rate of 0.45p per mile will be paid. Reimbursement of taxi fares will not be paid apart from in certain justifiable circumstances e.g. disabled visitors 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 Gwent OPCC and must be made on the appropriate form, supported by receipts where appropriate.

Visitors 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 Gwent OPCC.

## **13 INSURANCE**

Gwent OPCC will arrange appropriate public and employer's liability insurance for Animal Welfare Visitors to cover them during visits to a police station/Headquarters. It is emphasised, however, that this does not extend to motor insurance cover and Visitors 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.

## **14 PUBLICITY AND SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES**

### **14.1 Publicity and the Press**

It is generally desirable that the role and aims of the Scheme should be promoted to the public. Animal Welfare Visitors 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 Gwent OPCC and should not be undertaken by individual Animal Welfare Visitors, except at the request of or with the consent of the OPCC.

Animal Welfare Visitors should remember that they are accountable to Gwent OPCC, and not to the press or individual members of the public.

## **14.2 Social Media Policy**

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

## **15 SCHEME GUIDELINES**

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

## **16 DISPOSING OF DOCUMENTATION**

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

## **17 CONFIDENTIALITY**

During the course of their duties, Animal Welfare Visitors may acquire confidential information about police issues, and visitors will therefore be asked to sign an undertaking of confidentiality. Visitors should be aware that the improper disclosure of information acquired during a visit may attract civil or criminal proceedings. It is stressed that the results of visits and confidential information must not be included in the written reports to Gwent OPCC.

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

Other Animal Welfare Visitors' names, addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses are given to each Visitor in the strictest confidence and are given purely for convenience in making personal contact. 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.

## **18 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIVERSITY**

Gwent OPCC is firmly committed to equality and diversity in all areas of its work. We believe that we have much to learn and profit from diverse cultures and perspectives, and 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, and where those diverse backgrounds and experiences are able to participate and contribute. Gwent OPCC regularly evaluates and monitors progress towards diversity.



## **19 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, Gwent OPCC will provide each Animal Welfare Visitor with health and safety advice as part of their initial training.

## **20 COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE POLICE**

### **20.1 Against Police**

Where an Animal Welfare Visitor makes a complaint against the police which is recorded, whether in their role as an Animal Welfare Visitor, or as a private individual, the Scheme Administrator must be informed. The full details will then be put to the Chief Executive of Gwent OPCC who will take the initial decision on whether the duties of the Animal Welfare Visitor should be suspended or curtailed in the interest of impartiality.

### **20.2 Against Animal Welfare Visitors**

Complaints made against Animal Welfare Visitors by police personnel, Animal Welfare Visitors 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 Administrator who will raise the matter with the Head of Assurance and Compliance to investigate further.