1.0 Summary of Changes

This procedure has been updated as follows:

- Within section 3.6 Sgt has been added after reference to NPCC instructor;
- New paragraphs added within section 8 regarding data security and retention and disposal of records.

2.0 What this Procedure is about

Police dogs are working dogs and require handlers to have a positive, dedicated and caring attitude ensuring dogs are stimulated, continually trained and worked as safely as possible. All training will comply with the latest Manual of Guidance for dogs.

This selection process is designed to identify the most suitable candidates, having an acceptable level of fitness who can demonstrate the ability to bond with the dog and apply training techniques.

*Compliance with this procedure and any governing policy is mandatory.*

3.0 Detail the Procedure

Applicants for the dog section must have successfully completed any probationary.

Once a vacancy has been identified and authorised officers will be invited to submit an application, evidencing their personal skills against the published job description. Where necessary, applicants may be subject to a short listing process.

Applicants successful at this stage will be required to attend a one week selection process which will incorporate a requirement to complete a fitness test.

Dog handlers will be required to give presentations to public groups, and although formal presentation qualifications are not required, a handler must be capable of undertaking such presentation and representing Essex Police in a professional manner.

3.1 Selection Process

The selection process will consist of:

- A written test on the application of the use of force;
- A structured interview;
- A one week suitability course which will test the fitness of the handler.

The interview panel will consist of the Dog Unit Inspector or suitable representative, a Dog Unit Sergeant and a member of the Human Resources Department.
On successful completion of the interview, candidates will progress to a week suitability course.

3.2 Suitability Course - General Purpose and Specialist Dogs

The suitability course is designed to test candidates against a range of skill requirements in relation to interactions and confidence with dogs and personal fitness levels.

The suitability course will comprise of:

- An extended exercise period with a dog to test the candidate’s stamina and endurance;
- Exercises to test the applicant’s ability to interact with the dog including voice pitch and variation together with sufficient animation required to engage with the dog;
- A basic track laying exercise;
- Exercises to test the applicant’s ability to undertake roles involving bite work and search techniques including the ability track a suspect over a prolonged distance and difficult terrain;
- Presentation on a given subject relating to dogs.

Instructors will assess candidates against set criteria.

Upon successful completion the applicant will be eligible to attend the 13 week basic general purpose dog handling course.

If specialist – drugs dog handling course 6 weeks; explosive dog handling course 10 weeks; or forensic recovery dog handling course 6 weeks.

3.3 Basic Course

All basic courses incorporate the advice and standards detailed within the ACPO Police Dog Manual of Guidance. Students successfully completing the course will become licensed dog handlers.

Courses are normally held within Essex however, some students may be required to undertake the course within another Force area.

At the commencement of the course, instructors will make every effort to match individual dogs to handlers according to individual need and identified traits. Students will be continually assessed by instructors who will record weekly progress. Between weeks 1 to 5 a de-brief session will be held at the conclusion of each week. This will provide an opportunity for instructor and student to discuss the week’s progress, any issues of concern and any further development required.
Between weeks 5-10 de-brief sessions will be bi-weekly unless the student dog team has failed to reach expected levels. This will be dependent on length of course.

Where training staff feel that progress is not being achieved an action plan detailing areas for improvement will be created and agreed with the student. This will involve consultation with the Training Sergeant and Dog Unit Inspector. All written assessments will be made available to the student.

Where a student fails to achieve the required standard the Dog Unit Inspector may:

- Consider re-allocation to another course, particularly where the failure relates to the dog;
- Recommend to the Command Team the officer is removed from post.

At the conclusion of the course all students will be subject to a practical examination of their skills by a licensed Instructor from another Force area. This examination may be deferred for up to one month where the Instructor considers it appropriate to do so. Any such deferral will be authorised by the Dog Unit Inspector documented on the training file.

Should a dog not reach the required standard for licensing the Dog Unit Inspector may decide to remove the dog from training.

### 3.4 Post General Purpose Basic Course

On successful completion of the basic course, new handlers will be allocated an experienced dog handler as a mentor.

Handlers will complete a Personal Development Programme where progress will be countersigned and supervised by a Dog Sergeant. On final completion the PDP will be reviewed and signed off by the Dog Unit Inspector.

All handlers are required to provide continued training and development of their dogs and in doing so will be supported by the mentor, experienced handlers and the training staff.

### 3.5 Continuation Training

Dog teams will be continually monitored to ensure that the working standards of the handler and the capability of the dog are maintained. Where necessary the training staff will set action plans to support further development of the dog team.

Where the training staff, in consultation with the training Sergeant and Inspector, feel the dog team presents an unacceptable risk, they will reserve the right to withdraw the dog and/or handler from operational duties.
3.6 Operational Training

The dog teams are not to undertake criminal work exercises without prior consent of their Sgt/Duty officer, training Sgt or trainers whilst out operationally.

If this agreed the correct protection will be used – box sleeve. The only persons that can act as criminal are other current handlers and Specials that have been trained to act as criminals.

No covert or soft sleeves to be used unless NPCC instructor/Sgt is there.

3.7 Pathway to becoming an Instructor

Officers wishing to become instructors will be required to submit an application to their line manager detailing their suitability for the role against the set criteria detailed with the ACPO Police Dog Manual of Guidance.

Officers will be marked against their ability to meet the set criteria and those successful candidates will form a pool of officers who will undertake a personal development programme.

Where the number of successful candidates exceeds the foreseeable requirements of the organisation the final selection will be made using an interview selection process.

An officer will be eligible to apply, providing the following criteria are met:

- They must be a current licensed general purpose dog (GPD) handler;
- They must be prepared to undertake a Trainers Skills Course.

In selecting candidates, a review will be undertaken of training records to ensure that they demonstrate a continued development of their dog and a continual positive approach to training.

The pathway will consist of:

- Initial selection to the pool;
- The allocation of an ACPO accredited trainer as a mentor;
- The completion of a PDP in which the candidate will be expected to evidence personal development in line with the Manual of Guidance competency areas;
- The opportunity to assist on a variety of courses under the supervision of qualified trainers;
- Continual feedback by qualified trainers, mentor and supervisors.

Officers assessed as suitable for the role of instructor will be required to successfully complete a four week ACPO approved GPD Instructors Course.
3.8 Replacement Dog

Upon retirement of a police dog, the decision to allocate a new dog to the handler will be made by the Training Sergeant and Dog Unit Inspector based upon the following criteria:

- A review of the training records for the previous dog;
- A review of performance;
- A review of any performance action plans in relation to training or performance.

In order to achieve this it is important that supervisors adopt an intrusive but fair supervisory approach to dealing with performance related matters. The training sergeant and trainers will record all relevant material within the dog training records. These can be accessed by the handlers and they are able to comment on the records.

3.9 Selection of Specialist Dog Handlers

The selection of an officer to handle a specialist dog will be based upon an assessment of the officer’s performance within with their current role and the added value they would bring to the organisation by undertaking such a role.

The availability of a specialist role will be advertised to all operational dog handlers. Officers eligible to apply must:

- Have a minimum of 3 years’ experience with a police force or other government agency in the role of dog handler;
- Be able to demonstrate an appropriate level of experience and commitment to the role;
- Be able to demonstrate an ability to achieve the full potential of their current GPD;
- They must be prepared to undertake specialist courses connected with the role;
- In the case of an explosive detection dog they must be able to pass a police search course and retain accreditation
- Be able to demonstrate a very flexible approach to duties which may involve short notice changes;
- Be able to accommodate two dogs including home kennel and vehicle cage;
- Not be an existing specialist dog handler.

Officers wishing to become specialist dog handlers will be required to submit an application to their line manager detailing their suitability for the role against the set criteria detailed within the ACPO Police Dog Manual of Guidance.

Officers will be marked against their ability to meet the set criteria and those successful candidates will be invited to undertake the role of specialist dog handler.
Officers will be required to continually maintain or improve the standard of training in relation to their existing GPD. Failure to do so may result in the removal of the specialist dog.

3.10 Selection of Specialist Handlers Funded Role

There is no requirement to have previously had a GPD. As in section 3.2 the requirement is to pass a suitability course.

4.0 Equality Impact Assessment

This procedure has been assessed with regard to its impact on equality. As a result of this assessment it has been graded as having a low potential impact on grounds of age, sex, disability, race, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and pregnancy and maternity.

5.0 Risk Assessment

A formal risk assessment has been completed in relation to the selection and basic training courses:

- Risk Assessment – General Exercising of Police Dogs;
- Risk Assessment – Initial Selection and Training of Dog Handlers

At the commencement of the selection course candidates will be given a health and safety briefing by a trainer. Each candidate will be provided with a written safety notice.

At the commencement of each subsequent course a verbal reminder in relation to this health and safety advice will be given by a trainer.

Throughout each training period the trainers will carry out continual dynamic risk assessments to ensure any unforeseen safety issues are identified and addressed at the earliest possible time.

6.0 Consultation

The following have been consulted during the formulation of this document:

- Federation
- HR Partners
- H&S
- Training
7.0 Monitoring and Review

This procedure will be reviewed by the Dog unit Inspector every three years to ensure that it remains compliant with legislation and current ACPO guidance.

8.0 Governing Force policy.
Related Force policies or related procedures

- I 0200 Policy - Dogs
- I 0201 Procedure – Transportation of Police Dogs
- I 0203 Procedure – Animal Welfare
- I 0204 Procedure – Retirement of Police Dogs
- I 0207 Procedure - Exercising Police Dogs
- I 0209 Procedure – Bite Back
- I 0211 Procedure – Dangerous Dogs

8.1 Data Security

Essex Police have measures in place to protect the security of your data in accordance with our Information Management Policy – W 1000 Policy – Information Management.

8.2 Retention & Disposal of Records


We will only hold data for as long as necessary for the purposes for which we collected. Victims/public should be reminded that Essex Police take the protection of personal data seriously as described in the privacy statement www.essex.police.uk/dataprivacynotice.

9.0 Other source documents, e.g. legislation, Authorised Professional Practice (APP), Force forms, partnership agreements (if applicable)

- ACPO Police Dog Manual of Guidance