



JOB DESCRIPTION QUESTIONNAIRE (J.D.Q.)

POA CATEGORY CODE:

DIRECTORATE: Matrix
AREA/DEPT: Matrix
SECTION: MTRX Operations
JOB TITLE: **CONSTABLE - DOG HANDLER**
REPORTS TO: Sergeant Dogs
CURRENT RANK/GRADE: Constable
DATE: March 2026

1. JOB PURPOSE:

To provide a 24-hour support service to Merseyside police as a dog handler assisting in all aspects of crime and disorder, locating people and property, enforcing dangerous dog legislation, responding to calls for service across the force and providing mutual aid to other forces.

2. PRINCIPAL ACCOUNTABILITIES:

- a) Maintain a high standard of care for police dogs, on and off duty in line with force and national policy, thereby ensuring the development and maintenance of fit and healthy police dogs.
- b) Effective use of police dogs operationally, in line with national training standards, using a practical, problem-solving approach to the deployment of police dogs, enabling the department to assist customers to achieve their goals.
- c) Maintain a standard of dog handling skills, as dictated by the College of Policing Police Dogs Training and Care manual, through continuation training and re-licensing, ensuring a professional service is provided to the public and our internal and external partners.
- d) Educate internal and external partners of the capabilities of police dogs, raising awareness and promoting public confidence.

- e) Develop specialist knowledge of dangerous dogs, thereby enabling the accurate identification of banned breeds, and successful prosecution of offenders and reducing the threat posed to the public at large by illegal dogs.
- f) Have an in-depth knowledge of dog related legislation and force policy, in order to advise both internal and external customers of their obligations under current legislation, ensuring a consistent approach to dealing with dog related offences.
- g) Ensure that the trilogy of force goals, Just Talk, Just Think and Just Lead run as a golden thread through all activity undertaken.
- h) Increase the submission and dissemination of intelligence in relation to OCGs and known targets, assisting the force deliver its' pledge of tackling gun and gang related crime.
- i) Patrol the force area in response to operational needs, based upon tasking from the TCG, DORM and WORM, providing measurable feedback of activity undertaken in line with departmental goals.

3(a) KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE:

Have a thorough understanding of the police dogs training and care manual to ensure that standards are met and are consistent throughout the department.

Have a stable and secure home environment to ensure the welfare of the dogs in the handler's care.

Establish a working relationship/ bond with the dog to maximise the efficiency of the handler team.

Have a high degree of personal responsibility and motivation as a handler works primarily on their own as a team with their dog, therefore working unsupervised, patrolling independently and still maintaining service delivery within the operational parameters set by the organisation

Have the ability to take control of situations and communicate effectively with and more senior officers, regarding the correct use of a police dog in a given situation.

Be a police driver to national standards as a handler provides cover across the force and occasionally outside force boundaries.

Understand current POL2 tactics. Pass an annual fitness test at the level set for POL2 trained officers.

The post holder must be highly motivated to work within a small team, having strong interpersonal skills to ensure the department is able to collectively meet the goals set by the organisation.

The post holder will be required to show flexibility in terms of working hours and deployments within the parameters of the VSA.

Demonstrate sufficient practical ability and experience as an operational police officer, to ensure the best practical use of the police dog when deployed.

Pass an annual Medical by Operational Health Unit.

3(b)

Officers will be required to assist BCU's and partner agencies in the seizing of suspected banned breed dogs, therefore they must have an in depth knowledge of the Dog Related Incident Policy, the Dangerous Dogs Act and the current force policies in relation to it.

An in-depth knowledge, understanding and the practical application of general police powers in relation to neighbourhood patrol duties.

Specific knowledge is required in relation to Public Order tactics regarding Dog deployments, Public Order related offences, use of force legislation and the National Decision-making Model.

4. RELATIONSHIPS:

(a) *Supervisory responsibilities:*

When dealing with an incident involving deployment a police dog or dealing with a dangerous dog, the handler must organise area officers and police resources effectively, thereby ensuring that the health and safety of all presents is maintained and that the working environment for the dog is not compromised.

Under the principle of "JUST LEAD" officers will be expected to display appropriate behaviour that will motivate those around them to work as part of the team and achieve predetermined goals.

(b) *Supervision Received:*

Receive a daily briefing from a Dogs and Mounted line manager.
Appointed line manager for welfare and Performance reviews.

Liaise with Kennel Manager in relation to any animal or equipment related issues, with the kennel manager ultimately in charge of decision-making regarding animal welfare issues with disputes referred to the Duty Supervisor for the department.

(c) Other Contacts:

(i) Within Merseyside Police:

Force Operations Department.

Force Incident Manager.

Relevant OIU's within each BCU or specialist departments.

Relevant BCU Control centres.

Nominated area SPOCs in relation specific operations and dog related incidents.

ii) Outside Merseyside Police:

Animal Welfare organisations.

Outside equipment suppliers.

Veterinary care providers.

5. CONTEXT:

(a) Operating Environment:

High Visibility patrolling for target packages within the BCU's identified at a force strategic level.

Patrolling at high profile events organised by the Force Operations Department (Football matches / Demonstrations / Marches / Conferences / sporting events) in a Public Order / Public safety role.

Working a shift pattern that meets the core demand profile of the force, with flexibility within the shift pattern to ensure that core demands are met.

Providing professional police dog handling services to Merseyside police officers and staff and to the communities of Merseyside. Providing availability 24 hours a day 7 days a week through a variable shift pattern.

(b) Framework and Boundaries:

The current College of Policing manual of Authorised Professional Practice on use of police dogs.

Legislation in relation to the use of force.

Police Health and Safety at Work Act.

SOPs in relation to the role of a Dog Officer (A living document that is constantly under review).

Police Regulations.

Human rights act.

Dangerous dogs act 1991.

1871 Dogs Act.

Animal Welfare Act 2006.

Internal departmental policies in relation to the general matters relating to the dogs.

(c) Organisation: (For each type of post that reports directly to you, outline below the posts overall responsibilities).

N/A

6. DIMENSIONS:

Financial: Dog handlers are in receipt of a dog handlers' allowance in compensation of the time utilised on rest days caring for their police dog.

Dog Handlers are provided with a maximum 50-day limit for kennelling in police kennels per year.

Merseyside police dog handlers are no longer in receipt of mileage allowance and must seek tax relief from the Inland Revenue for using their private vehicles to transport police dogs to and from work and to places of exercise on rest days.

Staff: N/A

Other: *Customers:* Performance in relation to KPI's set for each operation and how they assist the stakeholder in achieving their goals.

Suppliers: Expeditious reporting of faults in relation to equipment and vehicles, to ensure that they are remedied in the most cost-effective manner. Identifying best or bad practice to ensure that the department runs in as cost-efficient manner as possible.

7. JOB CHALLENGES:

Working with highly motivated police dogs in challenging environments, whilst still performing the role of a police officer. Managing the changing behaviour of the dogs within those environments and still delivering a quality service.

Applying a problem-solving approach to policing, as the role is unique in that the handler and dog form part of a team and how they approach each incident is different to any other department within the force.

Flexibility has to be shown within the role to ensure that minimum training requirements are met whilst still performing operational duties on a variable shift pattern.

Always maintain cleanliness of Police vehicles for the hygiene of the dogs and the comfort of the police officers.

8. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Part of the initial dog handlers' course is an examination regarding the anatomy, physiology, hygiene and care of a police dog. This is tested throughout a handler posting to the department and they are expected to apply this knowledge throughout their tenure in the department.

Upon posting to the department, officers will be posted into the kennels and perform the role of an animal welfare assistant for a period of at least 2 weeks. This is to familiarise themselves with the department, the environment and the dogs that are in the kennels, to get used to walking and handling them. This will then be followed by a 13-week initial training course. During the course the student handler will be constantly assessed against their work rate, general attitude and competence. The training staff will provide suitable feedback throughout the course in both a formal and informal manner. If the training staff feel that the student handler has not met targets set within the course and is not suitable for deployment, then this will be evidenced and the departmental head will make the decision to remove them from the course and re-deploy them back to a BCU. Upon successful completion of the course the student handler will be posted to a block on a variable five-week shift pattern and undertake an initial 5-week period of mentoring with a more experienced colleague, at the conclusion of which if they are deemed competent, they will go on independently patrol.

All handlers will be subject to the PDR process and will expect to have at any one time a few personal and training action plans in existence, to assist them to perform their role at a high level.

Handlers initially train with a general-purpose police dog, which is a variant of a German shepherd. Once they display competence in the role, they may be considered for a second specialist dog (Drugs, cash, firearm recovery, Passive drug detection, explosive detection, cadaver) or may progress to a Firearm support function or Conflict resolution dog. A dog handler invests in their own future through time and effort spent continually performing drills and extra training, over and above their allocated days. This results in competence above the minimum standard and is rewarded with extra skills and training by the department on a more formal basis.

Merseyside police dogs live at home with the handler in kennels provided by the organisation, sited in a suitable space within the private garden of the handler. The impact upon the work / home life balance of the handler and their family cannot be overstated and the adoption of a routine that works for all parties concerned, especially the police dog, is of the utmost importance.