

DOG-RELATED INCIDENTS

POLICY (only)

OFFICIAL

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Department of Origin	Matrix
Policy Holder	Ch Supt Head of Matrix
Policy Author	Inspector – Head of Dogs and Mounted Section
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Policy

National Context

[Authorised Professional Practice](#) (APP) is produced by the College of Policing as the official source of professional practice on policing. All officers and staff are expected to have regard to APP in discharging their responsibilities. Essentially, our “policy” is to comply with APP as it develops to cover all areas of policing.

Dog-related incidents continue to place **significant operational pressure** on police forces across England and Wales, creating risks to public safety, officer safety, and animal welfare. Forces must respond within a **complex and evolving legal framework**, including the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, Animal Welfare Act 2006, and anti-social behaviour legislation. National guidance emphasises **early intervention, problem-solving, and multi-agency approaches** to prevent escalation.

The recent inclusion of the **XL Bully** as a prohibited type has substantially increased demand on policing. Officers must enforce strict exemption, control, and ownership requirements, leading to **sharp rises in seizures, kennel use, and associated costs**, with many forces reporting capacity pressures.

Policing activity must also comply with national operational standards, including the **NPCC Police Dog Standards** and **College of Policing APP**, which mandate lawful, consistent, and welfare-focused deployment of police dogs.

Effective management of dog-related issues relies heavily on **partnership working** with local authorities, housing providers, and animal welfare organisations. Models such as **LEAD** demonstrate improved outcomes where responsibilities are clearly shared.

Given these legislative, operational, and partnership demands, police forces require a **clear, consistent, and legally compliant Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)**. Such guidance is essential to support frontline officers, control room staff, Dog Legislation Officers, and specialist dog units in delivering safe, proportionate, and effective responses to all dog-related incidents—from low-level nuisance to high-risk dangerous dog situations.

Statement

Merseyside Police requires all dog-related incidents to be dealt with consistently using the full range of legislation currently available. It is our intention to fully investigate suspected offences, prevent the likelihood of an offence occurring, gather intelligence and provide education regarding the subject, both internally within the organisation and also externally to our partner agencies.

The ownership of a certain type of dog(s) can amount to a criminal offence. Allowing any dog(s) to be dangerously out of control in a public place or a private place is also a criminal offence. Legal

action may be taken against the owner and/or person in charge of the dog(s) at the time of the offence.

Merseyside Police is totally committed to the protection of people from injury and the fear of injury by dogs, along with damage to property caused by dogs.

Rationale

Dog-related incidents represent a growing area of demand for UK policing, and carry significant risks to public safety, officer safety, and community confidence. Merseyside Police are required to provide a structured and consistent response is essential to ensure lawful, proportionate, and effective management of these incidents. The purpose of this SOP is to provide officers and staff with clear guidance, grounded in legislation, operational best practice, and the principles of risk mitigation and public protection.

Aims

The main aim of this policy is to ensure that all our responses to dog-related incidents are proportionate, lawful, accountable, necessary and consistent, with every case being resolved at the earliest point and the safety of the public and our employees being the primary objective. This approach is designed to provide the highest protection to the communities of Merseyside.

The policy is underpinned by procedure that provides clear and unambiguous direction for all Merseyside Police personnel who have to deal with a dog-related incident. This direction should provide value for money, effective investigation and clear management of all dog-related incidents.

Objectives

- a) Reduce the risk of harm to the public.
- b) Reduce the opportunities for the criminal use of dogs.
- c) Ensure that log and case management is of the highest standard possible, with underpinning accountability.
- d) Respond to intelligence and information regarding dog-related incidents.
- e) Introduce a force wide virtual 'dog register' through the use of Niche. Maximise the number of detections regarding dog-related incidents and bring those responsible to justice.
- f) Reduce the number of dog-related antisocial behaviour incidents.
- g) Maintain a victim-orientated approach to any dog-related incidents and the way in which they are disposed of.
- h) Pro-actively enforce compliance with court orders where dogs have previously been subject to court proceedings.
- i) Deal with dogs in police secure kennels expeditiously in line with animal welfare guidelines and at minimal costs to the public purse.

- j) Protection of other animals from either the criminal use of dogs or irresponsible ownership, by means of education and enforcement in partnership with other agencies.

Application and Scope

All police officers and police staff, including the extended police family and those working voluntarily or under contract to Merseyside Police must be aware of, and are required to comply with, all relevant policy and associated procedures.

This is a non-statutory policy that sets out the principles to help guide decision making. It provides guidance that, on occasions, officers and staff may depart from based on the particular circumstances they encounter. On such occasions, officers and staff will be supported provided they can demonstrate a clear rationale which can be objectively justified for why they have departed from the policy.

The Chief Officer lead for this policy is the Assistant Chief Constable responsible for Matrix.

Incidents will be graded and responded to in line with the [Contact Response Policy & Procedure](#)

Criminal Prosecutions or other legal proceedings should be commenced as soon as possible and in any event within 14 days of the incident (unless exceptional circumstances apply).

Outcome Evaluation

The Head of Performance and Analytics (Corporate Support & Development) responsible for audit and inspection and can provide relevant management information to assist evaluation.

In general terms effective implementation should:

- a) Ensure the fullest investigation that will result in the prompt and proper disposal and conclusion of any individual case.
- b) Provide reassurance and keep victims and owners of dangerous dogs informed of the progress of relevant cases, by adhering to the Victims Code