

Is this the cutest recruit of the year?



Constable cuteness seems to be a good description of Police Scotland's latest recruit.

The national force has just introduced a new puppy to their patrol - and he goes by the name **Chase**.

The trainee has been picking up some tips on how to sniff out criminals at Police Scotland's Dog Training Centre in Glasgow's Pollok Park.

The German Shepherd police puppy was bred by the Metropolitan Police Service but has since transferred to Scottish soil and is now based at Larbert Dog Unit.

A Police Scotland spokesman said: "We hope you 'chase' down lots of criminals throughout your policing career Chase!"

Here at **Across-the-Board** we may not be required for canine recruitment, but what a great story to put a smile on your face. Read on to find out a bit more about the important role dogs play in the UK's Police Force's.



Police Dog Service Training Centre (PDSTC)

Police Scotland's finest are making a lot of noise at Pollok Park in Glasgow – but it's for the right reasons.

The force's specialist dog unit operates out of the park and trains officers – both human and canine – to work together to follow the scent of criminal activity.

With 47 doggy officers ready, or training, for duty, the centre is key to Police Scotland's operation across the west of the country.

They can be called out several times a day to deal with a variety of incidents – and their eager bark proves they are ready to take charge of any situation.

The pooches are split into two types of 'officers' – general purpose and specialist.

General purpose dogs – usually German Shepherds – will help track down criminals.

The dogs are also trained to bite criminals if they are trying to make a getaway – but this action is only taken if a suspect ignores a stop command from a police officer.

Specialist dogs meanwhile are usually Springer Spaniels, and they are

equipped with the sniffer skills to recover cash, illegal drugs or weapons.

The unit also boasts dogs that have a skill set which allows them to work with officers in the Tactical Firearm Unit during firearm incidents.

The police canine family is completed with the stand-alone dogs who are trained in victim recovery and finding explosives.

With so many dogs offering a wide range of skills, you have to wonder if there is a 'super dog' among the pack.

PC Janet Findlay, who has worked at the West Command Dog Unit for 12 years, said: "They are the furry four-legged friends, everyone loves the dogs".

"When you go on the general purpose initial course, you will come away with a police dog which has learned the basics. It's then up to you to develop that dog through its whole life and through its working life to get to a standard that is acceptable.

You're always trying to better your dog each year to get to a better standard than the last year.

But I wouldn't say one dog is better than the other."

The dogs live with their handler, and the pair develop a bond which equips them with the capabilities to perform their duties on the front line.

PC Findlay explained that the dogs – including her own seven-and-a-half-year-old German Shephard Ike, and four-and-a-half-year-old Springer Spaniel Diesel – make their jobs much easier.

She said: "If you look at the time it would take to search a football pitch for a knife for example. How long would it take two officers to do that?

Quite a long time. I will take my dog out, set him up and that dog could find that knife within minutes.

They are a huge asset."

She added: "I have 25 years' police service and this is probably the best department I have ever worked in.

You do treat them like an extended member of the family. They are with you 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

I am proud of them. I have had good results from my dogs and I am proud of the whole department as a whole."

PC Findlay has every reason to be proud of her dogs especially Ike, who found a man who had jumped in the water in Wishaw. The brave pooch was able to pinpoint where the man was in the water through his bark, and he earned himself an award from the Royal Humane Society in the process.

Another officer at the unit is PC Davie Auld, who has worked there for 13 years.

He is the proud owner of the unit's oldest dog eight-and-a-half-year-old German Shephard Skara.

Based on his own experience as a dog handler and trainer, he refutes the old saying, "You can't teach an old dog, new tricks".

He said: "You can always teach dogs anything. You can teach them what they want to be taught.

They can be stubborn though but you *can* teach an old dog new tricks.

"By the time they get to Skara's age they will be fully trained."

The job can be as dangerous for the dogs as it is for police officers.

But Police Scotland have so far managed to keep their pooches away from danger, which is a positive outlook for their role in the future of policing.

PC Auld said: "I can't think of any that have been lost in the line of duty recently".

"It can happen to dogs, what the dogs do is dangerous."

"It just shows you how much courage they have to help us out and what they do for the public."