

Wednesday, 24 April 2019

## Prisoners meet with therapy dogs

Prisoners at the States of Jersey Prison Service (SoJPS) have met with Jersey Therapy Dogs for the first time, as part of regular events to help prepare prisoners for release back into the community.

The prisoners were given the opportunity to interact with the dogs - Sunshine, Kipper, Nico, and their owners Valery Johnson, John Noonan and Ian Hutchinson (who form part of the charity Pets as Therapy) - which are used to promote wellbeing, provide emotional and behavioural benefits, whilst offering respite for people in various situations.

Nick Cameron, Governor and Head of States of Jersey Prison Service, commented:

“We use a variety of ways to support prisoners who may be struggling emotionally with adjusting to life in prison. Therapy dogs, in particular, have proved to be one of the ways in which we support the rehabilitation of prisoners with mental health and behavioural of issues, and helping to prepare them for release. The dogs also come with their wonderful owners who will talk to prisoners and discuss a variety of matters.”

The Jersey Therapy Dogs will visit the prison once a week, during the evenings so as not to disturb educational programmes or employment skill activities. The prisoners are also able to talk to the dog handlers and learn about the dogs’ lives.

SoJPS Unit Manager, Tony Brown, has led the implementation on behalf of the Governor.

Valery Johnson, owner of a therapy dog added:

“Being able to stroke and be close with the dogs really offers a feeling of calm and reassurance. We are really pleased to be able to assist the States of Jersey Prison Service and to support prisoners whilst in prison, and help them prepare for their successful return to the community.”

