

Midlands and East region: puppy raising update June 2025

Hi All, Anna Standing here, and I am the Puppy Raising Operations Manager for the Midlands and East region.

Puppy Raising Operations Manager



As I write this, I cannot believe that we are almost into July, and the summer is upon us. I have recently celebrated four years working for Guide dogs in June which really feels like this has flown by as well.

As we are in summer season, please do follow the hot weather advice that your Puppy Development Advisor provides to you and please let them know of any holidays that you have planned as soon as you are able to as this will allow us to arrange holiday cover as soon as possible.

I hope you've all watched the short but extremely useful video on positional cues. These cues are the foundation for a lot of training-based activities – not only within puppy raising but also future guide dog training – so, it's incredibly important we know how to properly set our puppies (and others) up for success.

When raising a future guide dog, the early days are all about building strong foundations and **positional cues** like “sit”, “down”, and “stand” are among the most important building blocks. While these may seem like basic behaviours, they play a critical role in helping a dog safely and confidently support their handler in complex, real-world situations.

Your puppy already knows how to sit or down, just not when you ask! These behaviours are instinctive, often connected to how the puppy is feeling, but they're not yet linked to communication. That's where your role begins.

Think of positional cues as the vocabulary your puppy needs to succeed. Just like learning a new language, they need clear, consistent teaching to

understand what's being asked of them. And just like us, puppies learn best in their native language, **body language**. That's why initial training uses hand signals or lures, before introducing verbal cues.

By mastering positional cues early, your puppy will be better prepared to handle more advanced guiding tasks later, such as stopping safely at kerbs, maintaining position in busy public spaces, or navigating around obstacles with precision.

Case study: Spencer, learning the power of “sit”

Before: Spencer was an energetic 4-month-old Labrador with great enthusiasm, but no consistency in responding to the "sit" cue. During walks, Spencer would sit at random times and often needed coaxing or repeated cues to sit when asked, especially near distractions like children or bikes. His puppy raiser unknowingly used multiple signals such as verbal, eye contact, and reaching for the treat pouch, which made it hard for Spencer to understand what was actually being asked.

After: With support from their Puppy Development Advisor, Spencer's puppy raiser filmed their training sessions and identified those unintentional cues. They reset their training approach by focusing on one clear hand signal, using the lure appropriately, and holding off on the verbal cue until Spencer consistently followed the motion. Gradually, the verbal cue was introduced and reinforced only when Spencer responded correctly. After a few weeks of short, focused sessions, Spencer could reliably sit on cue, even in busier environments.

The result: Spencer's "sit" cue became a reliable, understood behaviour whether he was pausing at a kerb, waiting to cross a road, or sitting calmly beside his puppy raiser at a café. His focus improved, and his puppy raiser felt more confident in guiding his development.

Need more help? For more information on teaching and strengthening positional cues, including how to fade out lures and introduce verbal cues, please visit Kallidus or speak with your Puppy Development Advisor, who can tailor support to you and your puppy's needs.

Our Puppy Development Advisors wish everyone a happy Volunteers' Week

During [Volunteers' Week](#) (2-8 June), Puppy Development Advisors, [Vanessa](#) and [James](#), took part in a little filming to wish everyone a happy Volunteers' Week while they picked up a few furry 'passengers' from the National Centre for their onward puppy placement journeys.



Coffee dates for the diary

I really look forward to the coffee session that we have running in our region and hearing about your puppy raising, and of course your feedback.

It is wonderful to see so many of you in person and/or virtually on our quarterly catch ups, thank you for making the time to attend and share your thoughts and views, it's wonderful to see our community supporting one another. I continue to be so grateful for all the energy, support and kindness that you all demonstrate as volunteers, and I cannot thank you all enough



for the support you give both myself and the Midlands Puppy Development Advisor team.

I had the great pleasure recently to present at the local volunteer awards and was able to recognise some of our wonderful volunteers in our region which was wonderful and a real privilege. Thank you again for all you are doing for us.

Within our region, we'll be holding several quarterly coffee sessions in July. Here are the dates/venues for your diary:

- Virtual coffee session (Microsoft Teams): Thursday 17th July at 3.30pm-5pm. There is no agenda for this meeting just a chance for us to meet virtually. Click on the following link to access the virtual coffee session (on 17th July at 3:30pm): [Join the meeting now](#). You'll need to enter the following details, meeting ID (321 618 850 130 8) and passcode (oq95yG7o).
- Nuthall Coffee session: Friday 4th July, 10.30am to 12.30pm - Back Lane Nuthall, NG16 1BT.
- Sutton Coldfield: Wednesday 9th July, 11:00am - 1:00pm - St James Church Hall, 59 Mere Green Road, Sutton Coldfield, B75 5BW.
- Harbury: Wednesday 16th July, 10:30am to 12:30pm - Harbury Village Hall-South Parade, Harbury Leamington Spa, CV33 9JE.
- Peopleton: Thursday 17th July, 10:30am to 12:30pm - Peopleton Village Hall, Main Street, Peopleton, Worcestershire, WR10 2EG.

Just a reminder, these are informal sessions, so please speak to your Puppy Development Advisor (PDA), if you would like to bring along your puppy and they will discuss with you further. If you would like to attend, please let myself or your PDA know. Any feedback on these sessions would be greatly received and I look forward to seeing as many of you who can make it at these events.

A reminder to use Guide Line

A big welcome to all our new puppy raisers who are joining our puppy raising community both in our established and newly opened areas. Your support is



greatly appreciated, and any suggestions/feedback is also welcomed. Please do contact me directly through Guide Line or drop me an email if you would like to discuss anything further, please remember no questions/query/concern is a silly one and would welcome talking to you:

- anna.standing@guidedogs.org.uk

Please continue using Guide Line as your first point of contact for support, to update information on your pup, including up-to-date weight and spay/castration dates, if needed, between classes and visits, please use the following contact details:

- 0800 7811444; or
- information@guidedogs.org.uk

If you'd like to share any feedback on your experience of using Guide Line, please send this to myself (anna.standing@guidedogs.org.uk) or Hannah Peck (hannah.peck@guidedogs.org.uk).

Your feedback allows us to continually improve the support that we provide you and as we are now using this nationally to support the puppy raising community we would like to continue for this service to grow and support us in puppy raising and we will do this through your feedback and comments.

Thank you for all you are doing and look forward to seeing you all soon,
Anna

Anna Standing

Puppy Raising Operations Manager - Midlands and East region

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