

Midlands and East: puppy raising update December 2024



Hi all, its Anna here, and I am the Puppy Raising Operations Manager for the Midlands and East region - welcome to our last newsletter of 2024.

As we approach the holiday season, I wanted to thank you all for all the support you have given both our pups and our Puppy Development Advisors (PDAs) this year. I also wanted to thank you all for all the support you have shown to me at all our coffee sessions, both in person and online. I really appreciate all your thoughts, ideas, comments and views and look forward to our next sessions in the new year.

In the new year, I will be sending out our next coffee sessions via your PDA, with a further guest speaker who will be attending to talk to our community. This year, it was especially great to hear from guide dog owners themselves about their experiences and their journeys.

A big thank you as well to all our volunteers who have supported us across our regions by attending many and varied events to help both with our pups' training and also to help us build and grow our community.

I am beyond grateful for all you do for our team, there have been challenges along the way, but I always find the community to be supportive towards each other and to our organisation. Thank you to those as well who have endured my Christmas quiz!



In 2024, we have seen 195 puppies progress into training and the next stage of their journey to become life-changers. We have also seen 283 puppies this year join us in the Midlands and East region.

Pups into training

In November and December (with some coming into training in January), accepted into training we have had: Chloe, Stella, Casa, Marissa, Inca, Vicky, Norah, Matty, Boots, Orwell, Quarry, Whiskey, Dolly, Michael, Pablo, Joseph, Dilly, Quella, Barrett, Dahlia, Ringo, Emma, Teddy, Jessie, Nicholas, David, Saffron, Malcolm, Micah, May, Phoebe, Sophie, Kevin, Hawkins and Florence. Thank you to you all for your support with these pups, we wish them luck as they progress onto the next stage of their journey.

I am excited to see in 2025 how we can continue to grow and develop as a puppy raising community to enable us to support the organisation and the waiting list of potential guide dog owners. Thank you for helping us to change people's lives and removing barriers.

I thought it would also be good to hear from some of our PDA's as we draw towards the end of 2024.

Jay Baker - Norfolk

My name is Jay Baker, I'm Puppy Development Advisor for Norfolk. I've been with Guide Dogs for around 18 months. When I started, Norfolk wasn't actively recruiting new puppy raisers or puppy fosterers, so the last year has been spent focusing on placing lots of new pups in the area. By the end of the year, we'll be on 19 pups and hopefully they'll be lots more to come in 2025! Also, in 2025, I'm going to be moving away from holding our puppy classes in village halls and instead running them in public places such as theatres, bus depots and attractions (such as the Sea Life Centre). The volunteers who have joined us in Norfolk are all fantastic and have been



amazing at supporting each other, our fundraising teams and Guide Dogs generally.

I've recently had my first puppy class helper, Rose, start assisting with my puppy classes in West Norfolk and while her experience as a puppy raiser has helped, it's Rose's enthusiasm and care that really shines through when she assists with classes. She is ready and willing to help with anything needed but I know her favourite part is getting to say hello to all the pups (when they're sitting nicely, of course). Without puppy class helpers like Rose, running classes would be more of a challenge and her help is invaluable not only to me, but also to the puppy raisers who attend.

Vicki Johnson – Leamington, Warwick, Stratford, Southam, Chipping Norton, Moreton in Marsh, Redditch

Fellow PDA Beccy and I have had a great year working together in puppy class as well as meeting in different locations around Warwickshire and surrounding counties. We have been really fortunate to visit a variety of different places throughout the year: Warwickshire College Animal Centre, Warwick Castle, Hatton Country World, Belgrade Theatre and most recently, the Christmas Market in Birmingham.

These visits have been great and have allowed us to expose our dogs to new and different sights and sounds to support them in their training and we cannot thank the puppy raisers enough for taking the time to travel to such varied locations. As you can imagine, some pups can find these situations more challenging than others, but it is so nice to see each and every puppy raiser support their puppy throughout and enable us as PDAs to gain an even better understanding of their progression - I for one, really enjoy these visits and am looking forward to another year with new experiences to come.

Jennie Sutton - Leicestershire and Rugby

I have five wonderful puppy raiser mentors who share their support across my schemes. With their knowledge, experience and willingness to help, it has enabled me to give extra support and time with those who need it,



without feeling the pressure to provide all of this myself. Their support has been especially beneficial for those new to the role and those who have dogs on behavioural plans. It has been well received by those they have helped, with many saying that they find it comforting to receive advice and reassurance from someone who can relate and sympathise, which has often given them a confidence boost.

Thank you for all you are doing, I hope whatever you have planned over the festive season that you have a lovely time and look forward to seeing you all soon.

If you need to contact me, please do not hesitate to drop me an email: anna.standing@guidedogs.org.uk.

Take care,

Anna Standing

Puppy Raising Operations Manager - Midlands and East

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