

## **North West region: puppy raising update March 2025**

Hi all, Vanessa Scott here, the Puppy Raising Operations Manager for the North West.

### **Puppy Raising Operations Manager message**

Spring is in the air! As the days get lighter and warmer it's the perfect time to get outside and enjoy the fresh spring air with your pups. The change in seasons brings new opportunities for training and socialisation, as well as more chances for your puppy to explore the world around them. In this month's newsletter we are focusing on foundation behaviours such as positional cues and manners - the foundation for all puppy raising training.

### **Foundation behaviours**

Foundation behaviours may seem like a smaller aspect of the puppy training pathway, but it provides opportunities for quick, achievable, fun and interactive training sessions to be established with your puppy, that lay the foundations for further training and behaviours. Foundation behaviours can be started almost right away when a puppy is placed with a puppy raiser. They can be tailored, in both duration and difficulty, to the puppy's individual learning needs, and progressed at a pace that suits both puppy and volunteer.

There is no limit to how difficult you make it, which can be very beneficial at the later pathways of the puppy raising journey, when the puppy is ready to intake into training. Can the puppy be told to "sit", "stand" and "down" for 30 seconds? Amazing! If yes, we can then see if they can do a minute. Can they remain in a position, whilst their handler moves away two metres? Brilliant! Can then then do it when the handler moves three metres away etc? This can provide an excellent session when the weather outside may be too hazardous to walk in, but the pup still needs mental enrichment.

The fast paced, quickly progressed and highly reinforced sessions then help create an even stronger bond with the puppy's handler, as well as setting

the foundations for behaviour that can be taken outside the house and into the wider world.

Recently, we had a puppy that struggled with self-control in social situations. This particularly manifested in being very distracted by people/dogs and rubbish, and the pup would lunge towards these. The handler struggled to get the puppies attention in these situations, due to the level of distraction.

By going back to basics and building up their foundation behaviours in the house, such as sit/down/stand and door manners, it helped the puppy's resilience and self-control, which could then be built up to help its self-control in busier and more demanding environments. It also helped build an understanding of when the puppy was being compliant, and they were rewarded heavily and positively, which then helped the pup know how to behave around more difficult distractions on the lead.

If we see the training and behaviours we expect of our puppies as building blocks, foundation behaviours act a solid and secure foundation for the rest to be built upon.

## **What's happening in our region**

### **An update from Local Volunteering Attraction Coordinator, Rachel Patrick:**

“Hi everyone, I have met and spoken to many puppy raisers over the past few months, and I just wanted to take this opportunity to say thank you for your support in promoting our volunteering opportunities. Thank you to those who've been able to get involved with events or simply shared their ideas and local knowledge, it's all been helpful, and I am grateful for your support. Do keep the ideas and information coming!

“The events listed below are in the development stages, so keep a look out for communications from your Puppy Development Advisor in the coming weeks/months if you would like to get involved. I appreciate some of you may be hoping to get involved in your area, so please be assured that I hope to cover as much of the North West as I can before I start my maternity leave in June 2025.

- Atherton Drop-in Session - Saturday 15 March, 1-3pm
- Stockport Libraries - TBC
- Trafford Libraries - TBC
- Atherton Volunteer Taster Day - Volunteers' Week (June 2025)

"If you'd like to help promote our volunteering opportunities in your local area, you can request a Volunteering Champion Pack via our website at: [Volunteering champion pack | Guide Dogs UK](#).

"Finally, a massive thank you to you all. You really are making a difference for people with sight loss."

## North West puppies in the news

**Puppy raiser Lisa Allison and Puppy Development Supervisor, Jay Murray, on BBC Breakfast.**



On 3 January, we were live on the sofa with puppy Herby promoting our need for puppy raisers across the UK. We saw a huge spike in applications and our Volunteering Office are currently interviewing new applicants!

These results compare to one day's worth of activity on our website on Thursday 2 January (before BBC Breakfast was aired) and on Friday 3 January:

- The general volunteering page saw a 768% increase in users, from 893 to 7,747.
- The dog hub area of our website (which is canine related volunteering info) saw an 884% increase in users, from 744 to 7,300.
- And the puppy raising role description page saw a 1,557% increase in users, from 345 to 5,700.
- On Thursday 2 January, we had 24 applications

for puppy raising. The three days after the show was aired, we had over 550 applications.

So, a huge increase in the use of the website, attraction and applications for puppy raising.

### **Welcome to the North West, Mary and Lando!**



Puppies Lando (pictured) and Mary were two of the first puppies to be placed in the North West in 2025. Mary is now living in Chester with Anne, who puppy raised Mary's Mum and Lando is living in Greater Manchester.

### **Puppy raising scheme in Cumbria**



Puppy raiser Andrew and seven-month-old yellow Labrador x Golden Retriever Nick (pictured) were on ITV Borders on Thursday 20 February talking about what it's like to be a puppy raiser for the first time.

Thank you to all our volunteers who have helped us with media coverage!



## **Coffee dates for the diary**

### **Coffee, Puppy Raisers and Pals (North Cheshire)**

We aim to meet monthly, providing an opportunity for our pups to socialise and for us to meet up. Retired guide dogs, boarders, puppy raisers, pups and friends. Currently meeting at Partridge Lakes near Culcheth, there is good parking, and a bus stop close by and a great cafe for refreshments. If you need any more information, please contact Joan [Usineroft@aol.com](mailto:Usineroft@aol.com).

### **Coffee Mornings Chester**

Guide dog owners, puppy raisers, boarders, volunteers all welcome for 'get Together' coffee mornings. Held in the Cloister room at Chester Cathedral enter via side exit 10.30-12.00 every first Friday of the month. £2.50 for tea/coffee and biscuits. If you need any more information, please contact [langmancyril@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:langmancyril@yahoo.co.uk).

### **Stockport and South Manchester Guide Dogs 'Get Together'**

Puppy raisers, boarders, guide dog owners and supporters all welcome. The group meets from 1pm - 3pm on the first Thursday of the month at The Sea Cadets Unit, Pear Tree Mill, SK6 2BP. The building is dog friendly, and the car park is secure. There is good public transport access. We ask for a £3 donation to cover refreshments and room hire. Contact Lisa for more information and directions [isaanndavenport1@gmail.com](mailto:isaanndavenport1@gmail.com).

### **Crewe/Nantwich area (new group)**

A get together on the last Thursday in every month, 1-3pm. Coffee, tea and biscuits available at a nominal fee (just to cover costs) at Wistaston Memorial Hall, 75 Church Lane, Crewe, CW28ER. For more details contact [dipiggott22@gmail.com](mailto:dipiggott22@gmail.com).

### **Southport area puppy raisers coffee mornings**

We are a relatively new group, we meet the third Monday of the month from 9am to 11am at The Richmond Pub, 234 Scarisbrick New Rd, Southport, PR8 5HL.





We welcome all puppy raisers (with or without their pups), guide dog owners, boarders, volunteers and withdrawn/retired guide dog holders. There is plenty of parking on the pub car park and it's on local bus routes.

We have the use of a private function room with adjacent outdoor area, allowing our pups to socialise and for us to chat. Tea, coffee and food can be purchased from the bar. There is currently no charge for room hire. For any further information please contact Jane [jigriff@mac.com](mailto:jigriff@mac.com).

### **'Settle days' at Atherton**

January saw the launch of the Atherton 'settle days' for pups coming up to intake age. These days allow both the pup and puppy raiser to experience Atherton before the day comes when the pup leaves for training. The day's primary focus is to create a positive environment and experience for the puppy, so that when they enter training that have had a previous positive history of the environment.

The days are primarily for pups coming up to intake age, but any age puppy can be considered for a visit. The days consist of a free run, a settle in a kennel environment, a sniffy walk around the site and a gentle introduction to the training van. The feedback has been extremely positive and has allowed puppy raisers to take in Atherton in a calm and positive setting, away from the high emotions of the day when the pup enters training for real.

These days are currently running monthly, and if you would be interested in joining one, please speak to your Puppy Development Advisor. If you can't make the dates currently planned, we can be flexible and would happily offer alternate dates where you can come in for a 1-2-1 settle session with your puppy.

That's all for this month's edition. If you have any ideas or suggestions for the up-and-coming newsletters please drop us an email at [Vanessal.scott@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:Vanessal.scott@guidedogs.org.uk).

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



Vanessa

**Vanessa Scott**

**Puppy Raising Operations Manager - Northwest**

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