

## **North East region: puppy raising update October 2025**

Hi All, Janet Champion here, and I am the Puppy Raising Operations Manager for the North East region.

### **Puppy Raising Operations Manager's message**

October's puppy raising newsletter features a new video on settling pups when out and about; how to start the process and build up to those longer settles needed when going out for a coffee or attending a meeting. It also includes some hints and tips for making settling easier for your puppy. An excited or energetic pup will struggle to settle more than a relaxed and content pup who has recently had some mental and physical exercise and who is also comfortable (has toileted recently!).

The environment that our puppies and guide dogs need to relax in has changed significantly over the last few years. There are so many more dogs in the community and pet dogs are now allowed access to places that historically only assistance dogs could enter. So not only do we need to educate our dogs with the skills for settling, but they also need to cope with the distraction levels as well - whether its other dogs coming and going in tight spaces while they try to relax or members of the public fussing over them as if they were a pet dog. On the flip side however, some puppy raisers may feel less pressure with their pups when in public spaces as there are often many pet dogs around as well.

I remember well my early days of training Guide Dog Owners with their new guide dogs and those specific sessions of going into social situations where we would ask the dogs to settle. We would generally request a corner table, out of the way of the main thoroughfare, so the dog had a corner next to the chair or under the table, when suitable, where it wouldn't be disturbed and could settle quietly.

One experienced Guide Dog Owner told me that some of the biggest compliments he could get was when he got up to leave the café or



restaurant and other diners would be surprised to see a dog appearing as they hadn't even realised it was there. That comment has stuck with me throughout my career and still to this day when I take my pet dog into a café (or pub!) I will still look for a space where they can settle out of the way and won't be seen or disturbed by other people, or nowadays, other dogs!

I hope this Guide Dog Owner's comment also sticks with you as it's a useful reminder of what we're working towards when teaching our pups to settle in social situations.

## Team news

As I mentioned last month, we have had staffing changes in the **West Yorkshire scheme** area which used to be supported by Helen Barley. Fiona Fraser (Puppy Development Supervisor) and Gillian Salmon (Puppy Development Advisor) are now supporting most of the puppy raisers from this scheme, although some are being supported by other members of the team.

We are still in the process of looking at what will work for everyone and there may be a little more shuffling based around the team's availability to ensure puppy raisers receives the support they need. This interim support will be in place for the time being while we work out what the best longer-term solution looks like.

I am also able to let you know that **Puppy Development Advisor, Elise Finney, will be leaving the team** on 22<sup>nd</sup> October. We are all very sad to see Elise go as she always brings a bright smile and cheery conversation with her, but she has a new job which is a great opportunity for her, and we all wish her well and hope she will stay in touch.

We are currently in the process of recruiting for two new positions, and we will update you with details in my next update.

## 30 years of puppy raising

I would like to take this opportunity to say a **massive "thank you" and "congratulations"** to **Laraine and Jim Knott** who recently reminded me that they have been **puppy raising for 30 years** as their most recent pup

progressed into training. This is a truly amazing achievement, and I am sure our thanks will be echoed from all the people whose lives have been enhanced by the dogs Laraine and Jim have raised.

I remember puppy number one, Hamlet, very well as he was the second dog I ever trained to qualify as a guide dog. He was an absolute gentleman, and I trained him with a lovely lady who was getting her first guide dog. In those days, we would often suggest that once the partnership had qualified - which usually happened at the residential training centre - that it was a good idea to wait until the dogs have settled back at home before calling the puppy raisers to chat and say thank you. This lady was so excited she couldn't wait to call Laraine and Jim and was thrilled to tell me on my next visit that Laraine had explained to her Hamlet's unique trick of gently pulling her sleeve when he needed to go out to spend! Great information for the Guide Dog Owner who had been wondering what he was trying to communicate in those early days of the partnership.

Skip forward a few years, and Laraine and Jim were raising German Shepherd puppy Monty, he had some health issues and had veterinary investigations for his back legs. The health team decided he couldn't carry on the guide dog pathway, and he was looking for a home as a pet dog. I had just lost my previous German Shepherd, and I heard about Monty and since then we have been lucky enough to have him as one of our family. He turned 12 last month and has a collection of health issues, but he is a lovely boy and had such an amazing start with Laraine and Jim.

Pup number 30 for Laraine and Jim is now in training and pup number 31 is being raised by them at home. Laraine sent me the quote below, and I have also attached some pictures of Monty as a puppy and more recently as a more sedate old man (pictures below).

“30 cute puppies, all different. So satisfying watching them progress and grow into amazing guide dogs and other various roles. Forever the proud Mum & Dad.”

A huge “thank you” to Laraine and Jim and to all our volunteers who work so tirelessly to raise our puppies for us.





## Rebecca's weekly regional virtual puppy classes

Puppy Development Advisor, Rebecca Stranney, is continuing to run her virtual puppy classes for those puppy raisers who are interested from across the region. These virtual puppy classes take place every Friday - **10am for general topics, 11am for newly placed pups and early weeks training** - and are particularly useful for puppy raisers with baby pups who would like support from people in a similar situation during those early days.

If you are interested in joining, let your Puppy Development Advisor know and they will liaise with Rebecca to get the links sent through to you.

## Trip on the North York Moors Railway



Recently one of our puppy raisers from the East Yorkshire scheme planned a day out for puppy raisers and their pups to the North York Moors Railway. As is often the case, at the last-minute this trip took a change of direction as Channel 4 found out about the day out and were keen to film the day as part of a programme they were creating about the railway.

With the support of Emma Hill from our Marketing and Communications department, Puppy Development Supervisor, Wendy Huggins, and Puppy Development Advisor, Elise Finney, the day went really well. I understand

the film crew were great and we are all looking forward to seeing the footage when the programme goes out.

Thank you to Laurence who arranged the day and all the other puppy raisers and their pups who were involved and those who changed their plans at the last-minute, we will definitely go there again.



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

**Janet Champion**

**Puppy Raising Operations Manager - North East and Scotland Regions**

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