

North West region: puppy raising update October 2025

Hi All, Vanessa Scott here, and I am the Puppy Raising Operations Manager for the Northwest region.

Puppy Raising Operations Manager's message

Welcome to October's edition of the puppy raising newsletter. I hope all our puppy raisers and fosterers are well and looking forward to a new season of falling leaves and darker nights. This can only mean one thing, more cuddles with our pups, and for those with young puppies - standing out at all times of the day in the colder weather.

Autumn brings new sights, smells, and distractions. Here are a few seasonal training tips:

- **Watch for leaves and debris:** puppies may want to chase or chew fallen leaves, instead redirect them with toys or the occasional treat.
- **Stay visible:** as evenings get darker, consider wearing bright clothes so that you can be seen in the early mornings and as the evenings draw in.
- **Weather awareness:** wet and cold conditions can hinder lead walks, keep sessions short, positive and be mindful of the conditions under foot.

In this edition, we share seasonal tips for supporting pups with Halloween and firework noises and ideas around settling behaviours.

This month's focus is on settling behaviours

The settle exercise is a crucial component of your puppy's training, and one that is highly valued by guide dog owners, in a range of various environments. We teach puppies so many different training techniques, that sometimes it's also great to teach them to switch off and do nothing. As always, each puppy goes at their own speed and needs to be treated as an individual. There are many different ways to teach your puppy to settle, and this will be done stage by stage, setting them up for success at every step.

A crucial aspect of teaching your puppy to settle is ensuring they are at the right stage of their development to undertake a particular skill. For example, we wouldn't expect a four-month-old puppy to be able to switch off entirely and settle in a busy restaurant environment. Frozen bones and chews can be excellent management tools for helping a puppy settle in difficult environments, but eventually they will need to be weaned off as they develop to ensure they are not reliant on these.

As well as their development stage, it's also a good habit to think about what time of day to practise a settle too. A question to ask is has the puppy's mental and physical needs been met so far that day, to ensure success with settling? To reiterate, every puppy is different and will need different levels of enrichment and training to ensure they are in an optimum mental state to settle with ease. If this is combined with the correct environmental choices - dependent on the puppies' progress - you stand a much higher chance of a successful settle.

Some pups may benefit from some low arousal training games before a settle is attempted, to tire them out mentally. Or perhaps a gentle lead walk. Some pups may favour a more physically draining routine before a settle, which is most commonly an off-lead exercise. Some pups need some downtime after a being off-lead, before settling is attempted, as arousal can be high following interactions with another dog. This break may be a short stay at home before venturing to a different environment to settle. A small chew or bone can also help relax your puppy into a calm state during a settle.

Most pups need their settling to be built up in stages and in keeping with their current development and settling ability. Remember, we don't want to rush a stage and cause a puppy to practise a behaviour that we don't want, such as being generally unsettled, whining or barking. Recently, we had a puppy in the North West that struggled to settle in any environment, especially around other dogs. So, we started off by practising settling in the home environment, after the pups mental and physical needs had been met for the day. We kept sessions short to ensure the pup doesn't feel overwhelmed. The duration was then built up in the home environment,



before being taken to other quiet non-doggy environments, such as the local bus stop and library.

Only when we were getting consistent results in these quieter environments did we then venture to busier environments, but at quieter times. So, a coffee shop in a busy town centre, but at a time when is less busy with people and dogs. As we made the environment harder, we made the duration shorter and built up gradually. The use of food in these types of settings is dependent on your own puppy, and how they see and value food-based rewards. So please discuss this with your Puppy Development Advisor.

Good luck with your settling training and thank you for all your amazing efforts!

What's being going on in the local areas

Team Cumbria

Last week, our Cumbria team hosted a 'Meet the Team Day', where volunteers were invited to meet some of the local team, attend a number of talks and eat cake (they were even invited to bring their own)!

Local staff helped to plan this event, Debs Hiscox (Guide Dog Mobility Specialist), Rachel Adams (Puppy Development Advisor) and Samantha Leavy (Local Volunteer Attraction Coordinator) all were keen to help. Debs and Rachel jumped at the chance to do a talk and answer volunteers' questions, and Sam gave volunteers the opportunity to add new roles to their repertoire (alongside the important role of being our nominated photographer).

Our attendees kindly answered the call for baked goods and brought a wonderful (and delicious) variety of buns, cakes and loaves. As a running order, we held four talks. The first two were from staff, with Debs and Rachel talking to volunteers about matching guide dogs to owners and puppy raising respectively. The next pair of talks were from guide dog owners, David and Lydia, who talked emotively about their vision impairment

journeys and the positive effect that Guide Dogs has had on their lives. These talks proved to be a wonderful full-circle moment for volunteers in attendance, as they could see the result of their amazing commitment and hard work. The below photos show guide dog owner David giving a talk to a group of volunteers (below left) while black Labrador guide dog Hunter looks at the camera (below right).



Talking of committed volunteers, this event was a great opportunity to present Caroline with her 25-year Long Service Award. Chuffed with her orchid (and other gifts), it was lovely to honour Caroline for her tremendous commitment to fundraising, and we hope to see her for much longer.



The event also served as the first opportunity for volunteers Lisa and Kim to have a reunion with Lydia's guide dog, Webster. Having fostered him during advanced training, this was the first time that they were able to meet with Webster again since he qualified as a guide dog (pictured below). A wonderful moment that epitomised a wonderful day!



Despite our best efforts, we still had a surplus of cake as the event ended. So, in savvy volunteer fashion, a few members of the group proposed donations in exchange for takeaway boxes of baked goods. Incredibly, this resulted in the Carlisle Fundraising Group raising a whopping £60.50! All in all, it was a very fulfilling day. I was glad that it was so well-received, and hope that it was an enjoyable and enlightening day for all volunteers in attendance.

Puppy class with a difference

This month, we're thinking about puppy classes outside of the box. One of our Puppy Development Advisors, Jan, came up with a brilliant idea, hosting a puppy class in the Egyptian Rooms restaurant (pictured below). To help

puppies build confidence and learn new skills while having a bit of fun. Puppy raisers practiced settling with their pups while they had a lovely chat, enjoyed refreshments and supported each other.

Jan also utilised the environment practicing ascending and descending the stairs in style. The staff were wonderful, accommodating and very puppy friendly. If any puppy raisers are in the Oldham area, pop into The Egyptian Room for coffee. Here is the link to the venue: <https://theegyptianroom.co.uk>.





Training and support through the spooky season

As we approach Halloween on 31st October and Bonfire night on 5th November, it's a reminder to be mindful of how your pups may respond to the noises, sounds and smells.

Halloween can be a fun time for families, but for puppies, it can be full of confusing sights, sounds, and smells. Costumes, decorations, doorbells, and excited children can all be distracting or even frightening. Bonfire night can be overwhelming for puppies due to their heightened senses and lack of understanding of the sudden changes in their environment.

Please refer to Kallidus for the puppy raising learning material '[being out and about](#)' for guidance on sights, sounds and smells.

And speak to your Puppy Development Advisor on how best to prepare for these seasonal events, including how best to use the Dogs Trust sounds clips with your puppy, which is linked to from the above guidance on Kallidus.

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, fosterers, 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 Usincroft@aol.com.

Coffee Mornings Chester

Guide dog owners, puppy raisers, fosterers, volunteers all welcome "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.

Stockport and South Manchester Guide Dogs get together

Puppy raisers, fosterers, guide dog owners and supporters all welcome. The group meets from 1pm to 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 lisaanddavenport1@gmail.com.

Crewe/Nantwich area (new group)

A get together on the last Thursday in every month, started on Thursday 29th August, 1-3pm. Coffee, tea and biscuits available at a nominal fee (just to cover costs) at Wistaston Memorial Hall, 75 Church Ln, Crewe, C2 8ER. For more details contact dipiggott22@gmail.com.

Southport area puppy raisers coffee mornings

We are a relatively new group, 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, fosterers, 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 jjgriff@mac.com.

As we wrap up this month's North West puppy raising update, I want to thank you for your continued commitment and support to the pups and to



Guide Dogs. Thank you for being such an essential part of our puppy raising community.

If there is anything you would like to feedback on or have any content for the next update, please email me at Vanessa.scott@guidedogs.org.uk.

Have a safe autumn and I look forward to seeing you all soon,
Vanessa

Vanessa L Scott

Puppy Raising Operations Manager - North West

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