

## South East region: puppy raising update October 2025

Hi All, Helena Gibbons here, and I am the Puppy Raising Operations Manager for the South East Region.

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

Welcome to our October update; I hope you all had a wonderful summer and are ready to embrace the beauty (and challenges!) that autumn brings. As the leaves begin to fall, our puppies face new and novel challenges from the distractions of fluttering leaves to new puddles and splashing cars, muddy paws, and of course fireworks season. There's plenty to keep us all on our toes, but also many opportunities to develop our puppies learning further - thank you for all you are doing. I hope you enjoy this update.

### **Settling in social situations**



Helping your dog settle in social situations is one of the most valuable skills you can teach and one of the most common challenges I find I'm talking to the puppy raising team about! Whether it's a busy café, a puppy class, or a family gathering, being able to relax and remain calm makes life easier and more enjoyable for both dog and handler, but it can be hard to achieve. Setting your dog up for success means creating the right environment, preparing ahead, and giving them the tools they need to cope confidently.

As you may already have found settling doesn't usually come naturally, especially for puppies, who we know are curious, excitable, and eager to explore the world around them!

Thinking ahead makes all the difference. Simple strategies like choosing quieter spots at first, building up time gradually, taking the time to complete mental or physical exercises before starting a settle session, and even thinking about when the puppy was last fed can help set the stage for successful and restful settles.

Something I am conscious of with my own rescue dog is that there is a difference between rest and waiting for the next thing to happen; we are aiming for a dog that is confident to rest and relax in social settings which will be the best preparation for them as a guide dog.



Puppy Development Advisor, Georgina Eade, is an expert at teaching puppies to settle. She feels that “teaching a dog to settle isn’t just about keeping them quiet, it’s about giving them the confidence to relax in any situation. When a dog learns to switch off, the whole world opens up to them in a calmer, more positive way.”

When things aren’t going smoothly, it’s always better to ask for help sooner rather than later.

Please speak to your Puppy Development Advisor if you’re having any challenges with settling, they’ll be able to provide you with practical tips and a clear plan to support both you and your puppy.

## **Puppy Development Advisor updates**

As I’ve mentioned in previous updates, we have had some movement of team members to cover different areas, and a couple members of the team will be heading off on maternity leave soon in the next few months - we’re very excited for them and wish them well as they welcome their new arrivals! This does mean Puppy Development Advisors will be expanding their scheme areas to help cover where we have gaps, and we are working

hard to make sure everyone has the support they need. Please do bear with us while we look at all our options.

These changes also mean we can welcome a new Puppy Development Advisor to the team, and I'd like to introduce you all to Danni.

## **Danni Bailey**



“Hello everyone,

My name is Danni Bailey and I'm delighted to be stepping into the role of Puppy Development Advisor. I've been part of Guide Dogs for the past two years, beginning as a Puppy Selection and Screening Specialist and most recently as a Canine Health Administrator. Prior to joining Guide Dogs, I worked with police dogs at the Metropolitan Police Dog Training Establishment, and I also studied and qualified as a Canine Hydrotherapist, gaining valuable experience in canine behaviour, care and development.

Dogs have always been my passion, and I feel privileged to work with our wonderful volunteers to help support our puppies as they grow into life-changing partners. I'm especially looking forward to sharing in the milestones of each puppy's journey as they progress and celebrating the dedication that makes our work possible.

I'm eager to begin this next chapter and to work closely with such a passionate network of staff and volunteers. Your dedication is what makes the Guide Dogs journey so special, and I'm excited to support our puppies as they take each important step towards becoming life-changing partners.”

## **Regional updates**

### **Online learning sessions go national**

Our regional online learning sessions have continued to be popular with you all and I'm so grateful for people attending and engaging in them. They have been so successful that we are now working towards a national programme of online learning, so all puppy raisers have access. Please look out for the details from your Puppy Development Advisors. We will keep running local sessions until at least the end of the year.

### **Puppies attending events**

We're so grateful to our volunteers supporting fundraising and awareness events, your efforts make a huge difference. While these occasions are a fantastic way to showcase the work we do, it's important to remember that not every event will be suitable for every puppy. Even if your puppy has already been to similar events, please still check in with your Puppy Development Advisor before attending. They can help decide whether your puppy is ready on this occasion and offer advice to make the experience as positive as possible. That way, both you and your puppy can enjoy the day while setting them up for success.

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

**Helena Gibbons**

**Puppy Raising Operations Manager - South East**

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