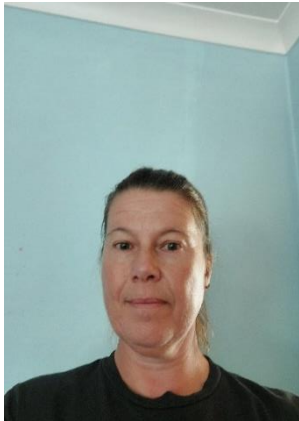


South West and Wales region: puppy raising update October 2025



Hi all, Leah Rogers here, I am the Puppy Raising Operations Manager for the Southwest Region.

Puppy Raising Operations Manager's message

Hope you are all well after a busy summer, here in the puppy department all the Puppy Development Advisors have been working hard to place and support puppy raisers and pups out on scheme. As the weather starts to turn and the nights are drawing in, it is time to focus on those things that your puppies may have not come across before, some of these may include walking in the dark, leaves blowing in the wind or even frost on the ground; this is the time to embrace these new experiences with your puppy and note their reactions in case more exposure is required.

In this update, we focus on the social settle. There's an accompanying video called '**preparation before social settling**', which highlights the different mental and physical exercises your puppy can undertake before learning to settle in different social settings/environments as well as looking at time of day and feeding considerations.

"Social settling is when your puppy relaxes calmly on lead in public places — like a café, a bus, a train, or even at the pub."

Giving your puppy the appropriate exercise before expecting them to settle in a café/pub/bus or train is important so that you set them up for success. Expecting a young puppy to settle without this will lead to frustration behaviours such as barking/pulling at the lead which in turn will teach them that this is the way to behave in such environments. Being well-behaved in social environments is a big part of being a guide dog as legally they are allowed into many more places than your average pet dog, without the ability to settle in a range of settings, it would restrict their future owner in so many ways.

Remember to start this at home, you can set up different situations in your own home to simulate a café situation like having coffee whilst having your puppy on a lead while they chew a stuffed Kong or bone. You can also have your puppy on the lead at mealtimes where they sit on their settle blanket with a Kong/bone. Or why not even set up a café in the garden with your patio furniture. All of these will allow you to practice before you go out in the “real world” where there will be many more distractions to deal with. Once your puppy is skilled at doing this at home, you can take these props with you to aid you in a café. However, please do remember to keep sessions short to begin with so that your puppy does not lose interest and start any inappropriate behaviours.

A puppy that has received the right mental stimulation prior to practicing a “social settle” will demonstrate all the right behaviours that are required to progress this through puppy raising and into training. This will be progressive depending upon the age and stage of training for your puppy therefore please speak with your Puppy Development Advisor on how best to progress this with your individual puppy.

Guide dog puppies visit Puxton Park, Somerset

A group of puppy raisers and their pups along with Puppy Development Supervisor, Lucy Avery, visited Puxton Park’s ‘animal zone’ as part of their puppy class to explore and have some exposure to different kind of animals.

Amongst the animals they saw were a group of Alpacas who were very interested in their special visitors that day.

Puppy Development Supervisor, Lucy Avery, said: “All the pups and puppy raisers enjoyed their experience at Puxton Park, and the pups were very well-behaved around all the animals. I would like to thank Puxton Park for allowing us in to experience all the sights and sounds and we are very much looking forward to returning in the future.”



A reminder to use Guide Line

A big welcome to all our new puppy raisers who are joining our puppy raising community both in our established and newly opened areas. Your support is greatly appreciated, and any suggestions/feedback is also welcomed. Feel free to share your feedback through your Puppy Development Supervisor or contact me direct via leah.rogers@guidedogs.org.uk.

Please do continue using Guide Line as your first point of contact for support, if needed, between classes and visits, please use the following contact details:

- 0800 7811444; or
- information@guidedogs.org.uk

Dog body condition score

As you may be aware, we are now requiring a monthly weight update of your puppy. This can either be given to your Puppy Development Advisor on a routine visit or via Guide Line. It is useful for us to have photographic evidence, on your pup's file. The best way for this is a photo, so that we can see two specific views. Have a look at the following pictures, which give you a good indication of what we are looking for. And, how to best take the photograph.

One: taking a side profile photo



Do:

- Use good lighting
- Where possible have a contrasting background
- Enlist a helper! Having a helper to gain the pups attention and to encourage them to remain still
- Have the dog in the standing position, standing as straight as possible
- Crouch or kneel (adjacent to the dog) so that you are level with the dog's height
- Include the whole dog in the picture

Following these tips allows us to see the abdominal tuck clearly and identify any excess deposits of fat over the pelvis area, chest and sternum.

Two: taking an ariel view photo



Do:

- Use good lighting
- Have a contrasting background
- A helper is always useful!
- Have the dog in a standing position
- Stand as straight as possible
- The photograph is taken directly from above
- Stand behind the pup
- Include the whole dog in the picture

This allows us to clearly see the shape of the dog, demonstrating a defined waist. We can also see if there is no excess of fat covering over the shoulder area or pelvic area.

When to seek help or advice



This is a photograph of an overweight dog, scoring 7/9 on an adult body condition score.

Note the following signs:

- lack of abdominal tuck
- fat deposits over the lumbar area (lower back) & tail base
- fat pad over the sternum (front of chest)



- heavy fat covering over the ribs (no definition between rib cage and abdominal area)

If you're asked by your Puppy Development Advisor to send in photos of your puppy you can email them to information@guidedogs.org.uk. They will then upload it to your pup's file. Please include your puppy's name/computer number and weight update in the subject line.

Coming soon: online learning sessions

After a successful trial in the South East, we are delighted to be rolling out online training sessions nationwide, which you will be able to book through Kallidus. Look out for these from next month.

Tell us your ideas for puppy raising

There is an awful lot going on in the background to continually try and improve the support we give our puppy raisers and there will be some new ideas rolling out in the next few months. We're always open to hearing your ideas too (perhaps a virtual coffee morning or a Q&A session with a particular staff member or department), so please don't hesitate to contact me directly at leah.rogers@guidedogs.org.uk to share your ideas.

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

Leah Rogers

Puppy Raising Operations Manager - South West and Wales

Document ends.