

South East region: puppy raising update June 2025

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

Puppy Raising Operations Manager

In this newsletter we are focusing on positional cues, a subject close to my heart! In my time at Guide Dogs, I have been lucky enough to spend many years as a Guide Dog Mobility Instructor, matching and training dogs with their guide dog owners. I know how important the work puppy raisers do: teaching their puppies excellent positional cues, which makes a big difference for their future.

Early days



When you're teaching your puppy early skills, using clear and consistent cues really helps. The positional cues “sit,” “down,” or “stand” help your pup understand what to expect. It also helps to build their confidence and makes learning fun, and that shared success is a great way to strengthen your bond, making the next learning session easier!

Remember if we use too many words or change how we say things, it can be confusing for your puppy, like if someone kept giving you different instructions for the same task.

Keep it short, sweet, and positive

Always try to keep training fun and end on a good note. That might mean finishing a session with something your pup already knows, so they leave feeling like a superstar.



As your puppy develops their understanding, start to practise your cues with your puppy on your left-hand side with them facing forward, this will help when you are out and about with your puppy in the next steps of learning.

Helping your pup understand cues anywhere

Once your puppy knows a cue at home, it's time to help them learn it in new places too. This is called generalisation, and it helps them understand that "sit" means "sit" no matter where they are: on grass, in a shop, or in a cafe.

For example, if your pup is great at "down" in the living room, try asking for it in the garden, on a pavement, or while you're out on a walk. Imagine this: you're sitting at a café, and your puppy calmly lies down by your feet when asked, that's generalisation in action!



A puppy's understanding of positional cues makes such a big difference when they go into training: it gives a dog confidence and understanding of what is being asked and better supports them in becoming a happy and reliable guide dog.

Your Puppy Development Advisor can chat to you about how to deliver excellent positional cues. They will be focusing on this with your up and in upcoming puppy classes.

Puppy Development Advisor update

It's sad for me to write that our wonderful Louise Casey has decided it's time to hang up her lead. Lou's contribution to Guide Dogs has been nothing short of amazing and we are going to miss her so much.

Puppy Development Advisor, Megan Lambe, will be taking over Lou's area. We are already well into recruitment plans for a new Puppy Development Advisor in Kent to take over from Meg. Whilst it might feel a little like musical chairs, we are doing our best to make sure everyone still has the right level of support whilst we wait for our new colleague to be recruited and learn the role.

This change may mean that puppy placements slowdown in both Lou's and Meg's old areas as we only want to place puppies we can support properly. Please bear with us.

A goodbye from Louise



“As I prepare to step into retirement, I just wanted to take a moment to say a heartfelt thank you to each and every one of you.

Working alongside such dedicated and passionate volunteers has truly been one of the greatest joys of my career. I've loved every single minute; from the wagging tails and muddy paws to the laughter, support, and camaraderie that makes this place so special.

The work we do here at Guide Dogs is truly incredible, and I feel honoured to have been a part of it. I will miss the dogs deeply, and I will miss all of you just as much. The time, care, and love you all pour into what we do makes such a difference, and it's been inspiring to witness every day.

Thank you for the memories, the friendships, and for being such an amazing team.”

Attending events

We are so grateful for all the support our volunteer puppy raising team gives to fundraising and awareness events. Your time and commitment really make a difference to the impact Guide Dogs makes.



If you are asked to attend an event, please make sure to check with your Puppy Development Advisor whether that occasion would be suitable for your puppy to go to. If it is, your Puppy Development Advisor can also support you with knowing how long to stay, what to expect and how best to manage your puppy at that event.

Not all events are suitable for all puppies and it's important we make the right decisions with you.

There is never any pressure to attend events and we'd much rather the puppy wasn't put in a position that it isn't enjoying.

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

Helena Gibbons

Puppy Raising Operations Manager - South East

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