

Midlands and East region: puppy raising update April 2025



Hi All, Anna here. I'm the Puppy Raising Operations Manager for the Midlands and East. It's been a busy few months here in puppy raising in the Midlands, with pups attending different places throughout our region as part of their training: East Midlands Airport, Bury Fire station and Ipswich Football club. Thank you to all our volunteers in the region who have helped and supported our pups and Puppy Development Advisors (PDAs). I look forward to hearing what adventures lie ahead for you all with our PDAs as we approach the summer!

I have asked my Puppy Development Supervisor (PDS), Rachel Bagley, to explain the importance of settling for a guide dog puppy and how consistency is paramount to making progress. She also shares her top tips for success (below).

PDS, Rachel Bagley: how to be consistent when it comes to settling

“One of the most valuable skills a puppy can learn is how to calmly settle in public spaces and at home. Whether in a café, kitchen or office, being able to sit or lie quietly and relax in various places is an essential part of being a guide dog. A qualified guide dog spends the majority of their time in social situations so ensuring your puppy is able to settle is an important foundation for their future career. It can be very hard for a guide dog owner to manage an unsettled and vocal dog in social situations and can affect the guide dog owner's confidence in the working partnership.

“The gold standard for a settle is to lie quietly to the side of the handler, out of the way of people moving around and the ability to stay calm and quiet around other distractions. This takes a lot of time and practice however and sometimes has to be built up very gradually. Sometimes the

gold standard is too challenging for a puppy, so we will work with you to support your puppy based on their current capabilities.

“One of the most common mistakes to make is to use food when the puppy is unsettled. While this can be helpful on occasion, the puppy can quickly learn that being fidgety and vocal is a good way to get more treats! Here are some other troubleshooting ideas for if your puppy is struggling:

1. **Make it easier and break it down:** go back to an easier location like a bench or quiet library or reduce the amount of time you’re asking the puppy to settle. Short successful sessions are more valuable than long, chaotic ones.
2. **Use movement breaks:** if your puppy gets wiggly or frustrated, allow a short walk or opportunity to toilet, then return to the settle spot. Alternating activity with rest helps puppies regulate themselves.
3. **Manage the environment:** choose spots with some distance from distractions like other dogs, kids, or high foot traffic. Facing away from busy areas can help your puppy disengage.
4. **Stay neutral:** if your puppy whines, paws, or tries to get up, avoid giving attention. Stay calm and neutral; any attention—even eye contact—can reinforce fussing. If your puppy does this regularly, it may be time to make things easier for your puppy.
5. **Use of enrichment:** a stuffed Kong or chew to a puppy is the equivalent to a colouring book or iPad for a child. If you are going somewhere where your puppy will need to settle, set them up for success by being prepared and bringing along an activity to keep your puppy occupied.

If you are consistently having issues with your puppy settling, please contact Guide Line or discuss this in more detail with your PDA.”

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 are also welcomed.



Please do contact me via Guide Line or drop me an email if you would like to discuss anything further, please remember no questions/query/concern is a silly one and would welcome talking to you:

- anna.standing@guidedogs.org.uk

Please do continue using Guide Line as your first point of contact for support, to update information on your puppy, including their weight and spay/castration dates, if needed, between classes and visits. Please use the following contact details:

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

If you'd like to share any feedback on your experience of using Guide Line, please send this to myself (anna.standing@guidedogs.org.uk) or Hannah Peck (hannah.peck@guidedogs.org.uk).

Your feedback allows us to continually improve the support that we provide you, especially as we're now using Guide Line nationally to support all puppy raisers. We would like for this service to continue to grow and support our puppy raising community, and we can only do this through your feedback and comments.

Coming soon: coffee dates

I will be sending out coffee dates soon via your PDA. I'm currently looking at venues so will send details to you as soon as possible. Please watch this space for dates.

Take care,

Anna Standing

Puppy Raising Operations Manager - Midlands and East

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