

North West region: puppy raising update April 2025

Hi all, Vanessa Scott here, and I am the Puppy Development Manager for the North West region.

Puppy Raising Operations Manager's message

Welcome to this month's edition of our regional puppy raising update. Spring has officially sprung! I hope that you are enjoying being out and about with the pups in the warmer weather, having less muddy paws and basking in the sunshine, which can make all the difference.

This month's regional update will focus on consistency and routine with your pups.

The benefits of consistency and routine in puppy raising

Consistency and routine can be a really helpful tool while training your puppy. We know that many of our puppy raisers lead busy and active lives, which is a huge benefit for guide dog puppies as they need exposure to wide range of environments and activities (puppy socialisation) - but there's an art to getting the most out of your puppy when you have a busy and varied lifestyle.

If you haven't guessed by now, the answer is consistency and routine; by providing your puppy with a routine, it can help to reinforce certain behaviours, help the puppy understand what is expected of them, and hopefully reduce frustration-based behaviours as well. While every day presents different challenges and environmental factors, having a core routine can help the puppy understand certain training methods, know which parts of the day is dedicated to them, and helps promote comfort, security and stability for the puppy. A lot of qualified guide dogs have fairly set days for routine.

While some dogs thrive in a routine of ever-changing environments and situations daily, some pups will need a staggered/consistent approach to



daily routines to help them understand what is expected at different parts of the day.

We've had instances where puppies without a routine struggle to switch off at home, both before and after walks, and constantly demanding attention despite having their physical and mental needs met for that part of the day. This is where we find a set routine very helpful, as it clearly defines to the pup that specific parts of the day are dedicated to them, such as walks, off-lead exercise ~~free runs~~ or mental training games, while other parts of the day are dedicated to you as 'personal time'.

During your personal time, your pup needs to settle or entertain themselves in a productive manner (e.g. enrichment toys, frozen bones etc). By having clear boundaries set or **dedicated parts of the day for you and your puppy** can help reduce anticipation from your pup about what comes next in the day. Of course, this may take time and initially may take some management strategies such as chews/frozen bones to teach your pup which parts of the day they won't be getting attention from you. But over time, the actions and routine of their puppy raiser, almost act as a cue to the puppy as to what we expect. For example, the lead going away after a walk is your puppy's cue to settle or entertain themselves. Likewise, when the family sits down for dinner, that should be the cue for your puppy to go and settle on their bed. This is where that consistent routine can really benefit all puppies.

Areas where the puppy team will look to use consistent routine as an aid to training include settling/toileting and mealtime prep.

Toileting time

A consistent toileting routine, by the time the pup qualifies as a guide dog, is an essential part of the process. However this takes times, and the pups routine will most likely change at numerous points during the various developmental stages experienced during puppy raising.

We can look to help our pups by providing consistent toileting areas, consistent times for walks in the day, asking for toileting on cue, and by trying to ensure the pup relieves itself before or after a walk, or while asked

to do so during a walk. This becomes easier the longer you have your pup and get to know their toileting routine at various points of their training.

Using your mealtimes to teach your puppy to take time out

Mealtime prep, or actual mealtimes, can be a valuable time to teach your puppy the art of doing nothing or at least the art of not expecting constant interaction. This helps your puppy cope with being in the same room/environment as you, without expecting constant supervision and entertainment. It also allows you some much needed time to yourself. While initially you may need management strategies to help with this, as time develops and as your puppy matures, these daily routines will help your puppy understand that they need to politely entertain themselves during these times of the day. This can also help with settling, which can then be taken out to more challenging and busier environments. Please remember that every pup is different and will develop and learn at their own pace. Your PDA and Guide Line will continue to provide support for any of the areas mentioned above.

PDA update: Rachel Adam, Cumbria scheme

“Since starting the new scheme in Cumbria, applicants have come in quite steadily. Mainly through word of mouth and often in groups, which has been great for me in placing puppies! It means I have been able to have groups of similar ages, and more puppy raisers who have 'been there and survived' who are able to support some of my newer volunteers. And the slower trickle of applicants does help me in organising myself just that little bit more so I can continue adapting and developing the scheme to the best it can be.

“As a new Puppy Development Advisor, I am continually upskilling myself and adjusting how I might deliver certain visits, workshops, online inputs, and experiences - considering what puppy raisers need, and what is manageable on my ever-growing scheme.

“An important focus of mine is to provide positive experiences and foundational training to both my puppies and my volunteers before we

progress onto more challenging areas or lessons. It is so important to support our pups in developing their key life skills, especially when exploring the world around them, so they grow to become happy and confident. Key skills such as learning how to be settled, calm and focused - when needed - around distractions (people, other dogs, animals, roads, plants, sniffs... you name it, it's a distraction!) but at the same time, enabling our puppies to be puppies and explore the world, just in what we might deem as a more appropriate manner.

“This has showed with one of my wonderful puppy raisers who is raising a delightful Golden Retriever puppy, Eva. Eva has recently gone through some hormonal changes, which has altered her behaviour slightly. But because her puppy raisers have worked consistently on developing those important experiences as a puppy, and as she moved into adolescence, she has been able to overcome most things that have come her way. For example, a dip in her wanting to travel in the car and becoming a little more 'clingly' than usual. Well done to Jane and David for all the support and training you have provided to Eva. She is a pleasure to be around, even when hormones are playing a big part in her behaviour!”

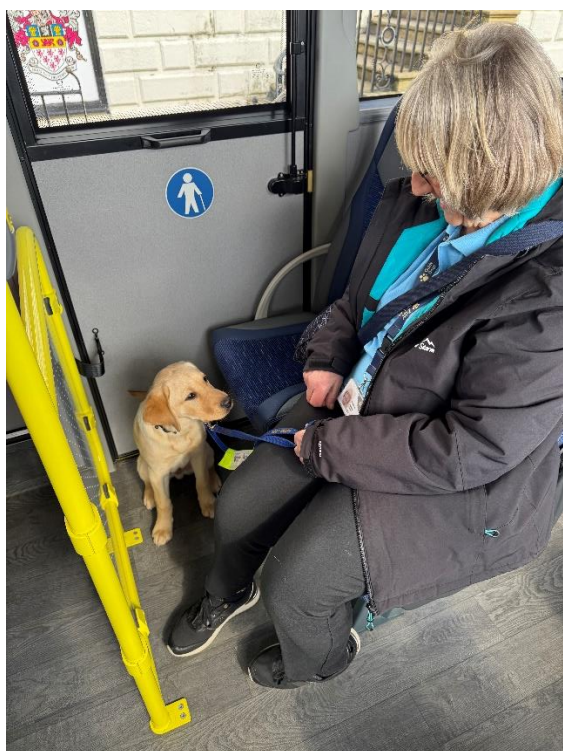
On the buses

Guide dog puppies and their puppy raisers got a unique bus training experience thanks to support from Warrington's Own Buses. Being familiar with public transport is one of the many things a young guide dog needs to learn, as in the future they will help a visually impaired person to get around safely. But meeting a bus for the first time can be quite scary for a puppy.

Warrington's Own Buses very kindly offered to let our pups and volunteers practice positive associations with all the noises of the bus, getting on and off, settling at a seat, and travelling. This unique training session gave everyone the opportunity to take their time, approach the bus at the puppy's pace and make it a positive experience. We'd like to say a big thank you to Warrington's Own Buses for offering this special day for us.



A large group of puppy raisers with their pups standing in front of a bus.



A puppy raiser and pup sitting calmly inside a bus, practising bus travel.

Fundraising update

Wrexham fundraising group

Wrexham fundraising group and pups hit the football club in April to raise money for Guide Dogs.



A group of volunteer puppy raisers standing outside Wrexham football club with their collection boxes and guide dog puppies. A Guide Dogs mascot looks at the camera giving a thumbs up!



Guide dog puppy Barlow sits facing a police officer with his front paws in her hands. The police officer is smiling as she looks at Barlow with colleagues behind her, smiling in the background.

Mayor of Wrexham

Last year the Mayor of Wrexham, Andy Williams, supported three charities during his term - one of which was Guide Dogs.

Andy raised £10,000 to name guide dog puppy, “Blaze”. Earlier this month Andy was part of Channel 5’s ‘Hero of Week’ feature, and met Blaze and her puppy raiser, Kath at Wrexham’s Fire Station.



Guide dog puppy Blaze sits looking at the camera with her puppy raiser, Kathryn, and a fire fighter. The fire engine can be seen in the background.



Guide dog puppy Blaze sits on the floor while chewing the TV camera's microphone.

Puppy raiser to run Blackpool marathon

Sarah Bulman, who puppy raises guide dog puppy Ernie with husband Michael, is running Blackpool marathon to raise funds for Guide Dogs. Sarah says:

“We have been Guide Dogs puppy raisers to Ernie (see pictures below) since May 2024. It has been a wonderful journey watching him grow from a small puppy, learning new things as he goes. Ernie will be leaving us soon to embark on the next stage of his journey to become a guide dog. I am running/staggering/walking/crawling Blackpool Marathon (26.2 miles) on 27th April 2025 to raise funds for this amazing charity so more people can benefit from the support and help they provide. Please help me reach my target to help them: [Sarah Bulman is fundraising for Guide Dogs](#) (JustGiving).”



Coffee dates for the diary

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, boarders, 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, boarders, Guide dog owners and supporters all welcome. The group meets from 1 pm to 3 pm 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 lisaanndavenport1@gmail.com.

Crewe/Nantwich area

A get together on the last Thursday in every month, starting 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 CW2 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, Boarders, 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 jigriff@mac.com.

Thank you for being such an essential part of what we do and for the commitment and dedication that you give to raising guide dog puppies.

If you have any questions or suggestions for the next regional update, please contact me at Vanessl.scott@guidedogs.org.uk.

I look forward to seeing you all soon,

Vanessa.

Vanessa Scott

Puppy Raising Operations Manager - North West

Document ends.