

South East region: puppy raising update April 2025

Hi All, Helena Gibbons here. I'm the Puppy Raising Operations Manager for the South East region.

For current puppy raisers, you'll already know or be quickly learning about the importance of establishing a consistent routine from day one. This is one of the most effective ways to support a puppy's development, especially when it comes to toileting and settling.

Puppies thrive on predictability, and regular patterns help them understand what's expected of them. When we stick to set times for feeding, toilet breaks, and rest; it gives the puppy clear signals about what is coming next, when and where it's appropriate to go to the toilet and when it's time to relax. This structure not only builds good habits but also reduces the chances of accidents and stress—for both the puppy and puppy raiser!

When chatting with our Puppy Development Supervisors (PDSs) recently, I was reminded of how one of our puppy raisers is very careful with setting up a good routine for their puppy from the day he/she arrives. For example, always taking their puppy outside straight after meals, setting playtime, and nap time. This routine setting and understanding their puppies needs regularly produces well-rounded and relaxed dogs ready for guide dog training.

Developing toileting habits

Having consistent routines that a puppy can rely on gives them confidence and sets up a regular and dependable toileting habits which later on, makes transitions into new environments easier—like a long day out or a change in home— as the puppy is already used to waiting for and expecting toilet breaks rather than going whenever the urge arises. This makes it much easier for the future guide dog owner, as they can rely on the dog being 'clean' when out working in harness and knowing what routine the dog is in.

The routine of settling

Settling also benefits greatly from routine. Puppies who have regular nap and bedtime patterns are more likely to feel secure and less likely to become over-tired or overstimulated, which as we know can make for a very challenging puppy! When we consistently use the same calm cue, environment, and timing to help a puppy settle, it creates a positive association with rest. This becomes especially helpful in the future when the puppy will need to settle in busy or unfamiliar settings. Starting with simple routines now sets a strong foundation for confident, well-adjusted dogs later.

Remember, you're not on your own—your Puppy Development Advisor is here to support you. They're always happy to chat about building routines, so don't hesitate to speak to them if things aren't going to plan. The team can offer so many tips and guidance based on experience with hundreds of puppies and families. We know every puppy is different, so what worked with a previous puppy might not be right this time. We also know how hard the first weeks can be as routines get put in place - so please don't worry we will find a way to help.

PDS, Sophie Boorman: how routines help puppies to thrive

“Hi everyone, I'm Sophie Boorman, and as a Puppy Development Supervisor, I have the pleasure of supporting our Puppy Development Advisors (PDAs) across Oxfordshire, Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Surrey, and Sussex. You'll often find me out visiting the puppies in training, offering additional support and sharing ideas to help ensure each puppy's progress stays on track.

“Having worked in rescue previously, I've seen firsthand how important routines and consistency are in setting dogs up for success. One of the things I've been most fortunate to witness at Guide Dogs, is how puppies thrive when they have solid routines in place. Whether it's calming down during mealtimes or establishing a good settling pattern, I've seen how it helps puppies grow into more confident and well-adjusted dogs. As an example, I've recently worked with a puppy where we set her up for success by always giving a Kong at human mealtimes to prevent begging at the table -

she now predictably goes on her bed when people are eating. This type of consistency is something I focus on during my visits, working alongside our PDAs to refine and adapt approaches so that each puppy's individual needs are met.

"I really enjoy watching the puppies develop and grow in confidence over time. It's incredibly rewarding to see them settle into their routines and become more comfortable in their environment, knowing the impact that consistency has on their journey to hopefully become guide dogs. It's always a pleasure to see their progress and be part of their development and see the amazing work our puppy raisers do, particularly when things aren't always straight forward!"

Online learning sessions on Kallidus

Thank you for engaging with our online learning through Kallidus! We were so pleased to have so much engagement with our first online learning session run through Kallidus. It was lovely to have so many of you there. These sessions are now bookable three months in advance on Kallidus and previous recorded sessions are also available to watch again. Please have a look and book on to the future sessions. We are trying to keep them to 11am on the third Tuesday of the month.

Thank you for all you are doing, you really are amazing. I look forward to seeing you all soon,

Helena

Helena Gibbons

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