

## **North West region: puppy raising update August 2025**

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

### **Puppy Raising Operations Manager's message**

In the August issue of the puppy raising newsletter, we've shared a video on **'how to travel safely through doorways'**, which looks at resolving some of the common issues when it comes to training your puppy to pause at doors before passing through doorways correctly and safely. You may be saying to yourself, why does this matter? Well, it for two reasons: the safety of a guide dog puppy in public; and the safety of the handler (puppy raiser and future guide dog owner).

Travelling through doorways may seem like a basic part of the training pathway, but it is a crucial one. Both for the handler and puppy safety, as well as an excellent opportunity to practise stationary positions in a variety of social and public environments.

By teaching your puppy not to rush through a doorway, and instead waiting to be cued through, limits the risk of doors opening or closing onto the handler or puppy. It also limits any immediate safety concerns and reduces the risk of creating a long-term aversion to doorways for the puppy.

When taken in isolation, "door manners" may seem a smaller part of a puppy's training. But if you think about how many times you go through a doorway when out and about, it quickly becomes clear why it's an essential part of the programme.

Your puppy's initial reaction will be to rush through a doorway. Most commonly this is due to excitement of what lies beyond the doorframe, rather than rushing due to an aversion to the stimuli. Teaching your puppy to wait at a doorway, and not to rush through, is an example of self-control. By using positional cues, your puppy learns manners, which is an enormous

component of your puppy's development, so any chance we get to practise this type of training, is extremely beneficially for your puppy. Other opportunities to teach manners are bowl feeding/toy play/dog or people distraction on lead, and many more. So, if we practise and strengthen one type of self-control, it can also lead to improvement in other areas requiring it too and builds the puppy's confidence in these areas. It also helps your puppy to focus on the handler in social settings, ensuring reinforcement comes from staying calm and focused, rather than rushing.

If your puppy is having problems waiting before going through doorways, please speak to your Puppy Development Advisor. Remember, this is a typical puppy reaction so please don't be worried. This type of training has the added benefit of being able to be practised at home: first, from room to room within the home, which limits the excitement factor. Once you've mastered internal doors and doorways, you can build on this success by going outside through the front or back door, which promises more exciting things such as a lead walk, or a run in the garden. This skill can then be built upon to be taken to any social environment and is a fun/quick and engaging way for your puppy to learn door manners.

In the video, we explore how you can train your puppy to have good manners when it comes to negotiating all types of doors and open doorways.

## **Summer: puppy placements and impact on dogs going into trainings**

We've had a busy summer of placing puppies in the North West and I would like to thank all those puppy raisers who have taken pups - whether it's your first puppy (welcome to your puppy raising journey), an overlapped puppy or you have been volunteering for us for many years, and you have a new puppy too.

We're so grateful for the incredible dedication, time and love you give to our future life-changers. All those endless hours training your puppies, clearing up after them and everything else that comes with being a puppy raiser. We really do value everything you do.

The next few months may be a challenge for us as we try to progress older dogs into training while minimising delays caused by the holiday period. We really appreciate your patience and understanding with this and if you need your pup to move as a priority, please let your Puppy Development Advisor know.

## **New arrival!**

For puppy raisers in the Shrewsbury area, I'm delighted to announce that Puppy Development Advisor, Jess Jarvis has given birth to a beautiful baby girl, Alice Tabitha. Jess and baby are doing well, I'm sure you will join me in passing on huge congratulations to Jess, her husband and their family.

## **Guide dog owner and Paralympic hopeful shares story and thanks puppy raisers**

A group of volunteers in Cheshire took part in a special 'guiding' experience morning a few weeks ago. Atherton-based Guide Dog Trainers Sophie Delaney and Shellie Banister led an outdoor blindfold handle walk with puppy raisers, giving them a taster of how it feels to be guided by a dog.

The group learnt more about different eye conditions and how they affect vision to help them understand more about why we train our pups certain behaviours in their first year as they learn the foundations to become a guide dog.

Scott Bailey, who is in the running to compete in Judo at the Los Angeles Paralympics in 2028 shared his inspiring story about his sight loss journey. He also told attendees how his guide dog Milo changed his life and how the incredible work of our puppy raisers have helped to build those vital behaviours needed by guide dogs.

Scott said: "Life-changers isn't just a slogan; Milo is just that. He's changed my life completely."

There was also the opportunity for puppy raisers to share uplifting stories about their experiences of puppy raising and finding out about the different parts of the guide dog journey.

One volunteer said: "It was an inspirational morning," while another said, "this event really reminded me why I puppy raise."

Guide Dogs would like to say a big thank you to Winnington Park Rugby Club in Northwich for the use of their venue.



Picture of volunteers sat listening to guide dog owner Scott Bailey who is sat at the front of the room talking about his sight loss journey.



Picture shows volunteers testing out simulation glasses, which highlight some of the challenges that our visually impaired service users face when it comes to tasks such as reading text and counting money.

## When one chapter ends, a new one begins

One of the first guide dog puppies to be raised in Cumbria is now transforming the life of someone with sight loss.

Vernon, a yellow Labrador, was puppy raised by Una Fife in Cumbria. He then moved to Atherton for his early training, and onto Maidstone for his advanced training where he was matched with Caroline. Caroline said her life has been transformed: “I can now go to the shops on my own. He’s filled a dog-shaped gap in my life and brings me joy.”

Caroline shared “then and now” photos with Una, thanking her for her dedication. For Una, the pride outweighs the parting: “I was heartbroken when he left, but hearing from his new owner made it all worth it. These dogs are so loved and important.”



From left to right: puppy raiser Una holding guide dog puppy, Vernon (left), and guide dog owner Caroline with Vernon proudly standing in his harness at the waterfront (right).





## **Coffee mornings**

### **Coffee, puppy raisers and pals (North Cheshire)**

We aim to meet monthly providing an opportunity for our pups to socialise and for us to meet up. Retired guide dogs, boarders, puppy raisers, pups and friends. Currently meeting at Partridge Lakes near Culcheth. There is good parking, a bus stop close by and a great cafe for refreshments. If you need any more information, please contact Joan [Usincroft@aol.com](mailto: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](mailto: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 1pm to 3pm on the first Thursday of the month at The Sea Cadets Unit Pear tree Mill, 8K6 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](mailto:lisaanndavenport1@gmail.com).

### **Crewe/Nantwich area (new group)**

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). Wistaston Memorial Hall, 75 Church Ln, Crewe, CW28ER. For more details contact [dipiggott22@gmail.com](mailto: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, 284 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 [jjgriff@mac.com](mailto:jjgriff@mac.com).

Thank you once again, for being such an essential part of Guide Dogs - you're not just raising puppies, you're changing lives.

If you have any questions or anything you would like to add to the newsletter, please email me at [Vanessal.scott@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:Vanessal.scott@guidedogs.org.uk).

Kind regards,

**Vanessa Scott**

**Puppy Raising Operations Manager - North West**

**Document ends.**