

Scotland and Northern Ireland region: puppy raising update August 2025

Hi All, Fiona Fraser here, Puppy Development Supervisor for the Scotland and Northern Ireland region.

As we come to the end of summer, we're still navigating some very warm weather. Thank you all for being so proactive in managing your pups in these ever-changing conditions.

It's been an exciting time for Scotland and Northern Ireland! This update is packed with highlights — from our volunteer awards, returning staff to some memorable days out, including the most recent Game of Thrones tour in Belfast.

Training focus: doors

This month's training video focuses on doors — something we often overlook because we're busy working on bigger training goals like dog distraction, general social greetings, or recall. However, this is a basic skill that shouldn't be overlooked.

At home, doors aren't usually exciting for a pup — they can wander in and out freely and move through internal doors off the lead. But on the lead, doors should signal self-control. We work with pups on different types of doors, in different places, to build calm and consistent behaviour. Please watch the video for extra hints and tips.

For example, if your puppy is on "house arrest" during a season or while recovering from a spay or castration, this is a perfect low-impact exercise to keep training going. It transfers beautifully into real-world scenarios once you're back out and about.

Remember, your puppy might be very excited to get to the other side of a door, especially when going from indoors to outdoors. Once they learn that a slow, calm exit gets them there faster, you'll notice walks becoming far more enjoyable and consistent.



Fundraising groups help promote puppy raising

Recruitment has been a big focus for us recently, and we're delighted to see progress. Our local fundraising groups have been amazing in supporting our cause and promoting puppy raising at their events. They have been taking leaflets, posters, and sharing QR codes to help spread the word.

This has given us a fantastic boost to our recruitment efforts, and we want to thank our local fundraising groups for their continued support with recruitment. We in the puppy raising team are grateful for all that you do to support us.

Tell us about your holiday plans

As summer winds down, many of our puppy raisers will begin making plans to go away on holiday over the coming months. To help us plan around your well-deserved breaks, **please give us at least two weeks' notice**. Advance notice helps us plan our resources and visits much more effectively, as well as organise foster cover for your puppy.

We completely understand that emergencies happen, and we will never hesitate to help immediately in these situations. But do give us as much warning as possible, as arranging lots of last-minute requests can put a strain on Puppy Development Advisors.

If you'd like to support our puppy fostering programme, we're always happy to hear from volunteers! If you might be interested in becoming a foster coordinator, please mention it to your Puppy Development Advisor — some schemes could benefit from having a volunteer in this role.

Event: Forfar open day - celebrating 60 years

You are warmly invited to join us at Guide Dogs Regional Centre Scotland in Forfar for a [family fun day](#) and to celebrate our 60th birthday on **Saturday 20th September, from 11:00am**.

If you're currently puppy raising and planning to come along, we encourage you, where possible, to leave your puppy at home. This will be a stimulating

and exciting environment with lots of guide dogs present and many distractions - which may overwhelm your puppy. However, if you do need to bring your puppy and feel they can cope, there will be a designated puppy rest area available. Please speak to your Puppy Development Advisor first to discuss bringing your puppy to this event.

We also want to thank the puppy raisers who will be doing a small demonstration during the day. Their efforts are very much appreciated in helping make this a wonderful event.

Please do pass the word far and wide to anyone who might want to come and see our training school and enjoy a fun day out. We'll share more information across our social media channels, including the [Guide Dogs Scotland Facebook page](#) and [Puppy raising for Guide Dogs Facebook group](#).

Health and safety reminders

Health and safety is something we're deeply passionate about at Guide Dogs – it's essential for keeping our pups, our volunteers, and the public safe. Here's a reminder of

- **Equipment:** please remember that at the puppy raising stage, only Guide Dogs-issued equipment should be used, unless specifically authorised by your Puppy Development Advisor for a particular behaviour.
- **Kallidus:** make sure to log into your Kallidus account regularly to ensure all your learning modules are up to date. This is part of your support for your puppy's training and development. The updated version is now more streamlined and easier to navigate. If you do encounter any problems or issues with the online access or content, please contact your Puppy Development Advisor.
- **Off-lead exercise:** please ensure you have completed all off-lead exercise modules on Kallidus. If you have any concerns, need a refresher or experiencing any issues or unable to access any of the off-lead exercise materials, please contact your Puppy Development Advisor.

Body condition score and weight management

We are continuing to track body condition scores and weights closely using the Waltham Growth Charts. Please ensure your puppy is weighed regularly and record these weights on the charts.

Your Puppy Development Advisor will work with you to ensure your pup is at a healthy weight to move into the next stage of training. Sometimes adjustments are needed, but this is all part of setting them up for success.

When we request a monthly weight update, it is useful for us to have photographic evidence, on your pup's file. The best way for this is a photo, so that we can see two specific views. Have a look at the following pictures, which give you a good indication of what we are looking for. And, how to best take the photograph.

One: taking a side profile photo



Do:

- Use good lighting
- Where possible have a contrasting background

- Enlist a helper! Having a helper to gain the pups attention and to encourage them to remain still
- Have the dog in the standing position, standing as straight as possible
- Crouch or kneel (adjacent to the dog) so that you're level with the dog's height
- Include the whole dog in the picture

Following these tips allows us to see the abdominal tuck clearly and identify any excess deposits of fat over the pelvis area, chest and sternum.

Two: taking an ariel view photo



Do:

- Use good lighting
- Have a contrasting background
- A helper is always useful!
- Have the dog in a standing position
- Stand as straight as possible
- The photograph is taken directly from above
- Stand behind the pup
- Include the whole dog in the picture

This allows us to clearly see the shape of the dog, demonstrating a defined waist. We can also see if there is no excess of fat covering over the shoulder area or pelvic

area.

When to seek help or advice



This is a photograph of an overweight dog, scoring 7/9 on an adult body condition score.

Note the following signs:

- lack of abdominal tuck
- fat deposits over the lumbar area (lower back) & tail base
- fat pad over the sternum (front of chest)
- heavy fat covering over the ribs (no definition between rib cage and abdominal area)

If you're asked by your Puppy Development Advisor to send in photos of your puppy you can email them to information@guidedogs.org.uk. They will then upload it to your pup's file. Please include your puppy's name/computer number and weight update in the subject line.

Thank you for all your commitment in ensuring all the paperwork is kept up to date for your puppies. This has been a fantastic help when preparing our puppies for the next stage of training.

Local Volunteer Awards

We had an outstanding turnout at our Local Volunteer Awards, with many puppy raisers nominated through our Pat on the Back scheme.

Congratulations to all those puppy raisers who achieved awards — we are so proud of you!

We really don't have enough space to individually recognise every volunteer's contribution at these events, and that just goes to show how fantastic you all are.

Please remember whether or not you receive an award from Guide Dogs, you are doing an amazing job that changes lives. We truly appreciate everything you do.

A special thank you to our fosterers

Our fosterers have been fantastic this summer. With many puppies in need of urgent placement, you've stepped up at short notice — some of you even managing your own puppies alongside others. Without your dedication, we couldn't support our puppy raisers.

If you are a fosterer and would like to attend puppy class, please contact your Puppy Development Advisor to see if there's space. We'd love to see you there! If you haven't fostered for a while but have availability again, please let your Puppy Development Advisor know.

Northern Ireland: farewell and welcome back



We say a fond farewell to Puppy Development Advisor, Gillian Salmon, who is stepping back from Northern Ireland while I extend a warm welcome back to Puppy Development Advisor, Emma Chicken, who returns from maternity leave.

Many of you will have known Emma as Emma Steel (pictured). She's had an eventful year — not only welcoming her beautiful baby girl, Ronnie Marie, but also getting married and taking on her new surname, Chicken.

I know all the puppy raisers are delighted that Emma is back, and it will be fantastic having a Puppy Development Advisor on the ground every

week again, rather than the remote cover Fiona and Gillian have been providing with visits every three weeks.

Over the past year, Northern Ireland's scheme has gone from strength to strength thanks to the incredible dedication of our volunteers, who have not wavered despite not having a Puppy Development Advisor based in Northern Ireland. The transition from Emma to Gillian was seamless, and I know puppy raisers have loved having Gillian's support but are equally excited to welcome Emma back onto the scheme.

It's always hard to leave a new baby and return to work, but let's face it, when you're coming back to guide dog puppies, it definitely makes it a lot easier!

Thank you to everyone in Northern Ireland for your continued support.

In pictures: Game of Thrones visit

Puppy visits can take place in a variety of places, from town halls to airports. A recent group puppy visit had a certain medieval feel when puppy raisers socialised their pups at Game of Thrones - not one puppy was frightened by a dragon at this event!



Pictured above, from left to right: Catherine and guide dog puppy, Zeb; Gillian and guide dog puppy, Lulu; and Christine and guide dog puppy, Breeze.

Pictured below, Catherine and guide dog puppy, Zeb.



Kind regards,

Fiona Fraser

Puppy Development Supervisor - Scotland and Northern Ireland

Document ends.