

## North West Regional Centre

Welcome to the new newsletter from Atherton.



Hi, I'm Caroline Charnock, the CAS (Canine Assisted Services) Operations Manager for dog flow here at Atherton. Some of my responsibilities include planning for new dogs coming in, making sure we have the right number of dogs in training with our 20 Guide Dog Trainers (GDTs), and planning the next stages for our dogs after training.

Volunteers are integral to our dogs' journeys, from beginning to end. My team works very closely with our fosterers in particular to ensure we get the best from our dogs and continue to create as many partnerships as we are able - and there are so many other volunteers who support us in many different ways. Everyone's contribution is needed and appreciated. Thank you.

In future, our newsletter will give you a behind-the-scenes look at what happens within your local team, including activities from other departments, events and meet-ups, volunteer/service user stories and how staff and volunteers support our dogs, from puppy to partnership. You should hear from us around four times a year - please do let us know what you think about this first newsletter so we can improve future editions.

And what better way to start than with the wonderful news that one of our volunteers in Atherton, Lisa Allison, won the 'Expert' award at the Guide Dogs People Awards last month, in recognition of her dedication to Guide Dogs and helping others. Recently, she offered her support to our national puppy raiser recruitment campaign, including appearances on television and radio which helped encourage many more vital applications - congratulations Lisa!

Caroline  
CAS Operations Manager

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# Dogs in training



## Duchess

Hi, I'm Alex and I'm an Academy Guide Dog Trainer at the North West Regional Centre. I joined Guide Dogs in January 2022 and I'm due to finish my training this coming January.

I studied Animal Management in college and Animal Behaviour at Liverpool John Moores University. I've always had a passion for animals and, more specifically, dogs. This dog is Duchess, she's 18 months old and is one of eight dogs born into her litter which coincided with the Platinum Jubilee, hence her name.

Duchess is coming along well in her training and excels at her harness work. She loves to locate objectives such as benches, checkout counters and traffic signal boxes. Duchess loves to chew on a frozen bone or play with her Kong wobbler during her downtime and is always enthusiastic about throwing her head into her harness.

Duchess should finish her training around the same time as me in January which is fitting. I have high hopes for her match, she'll make a great guide dog.

# Dogs in training

## Magic

Hi, I'm Jayne a Guide Dog Trainer here at Atherton. Magic has been in training for 15 weeks and is progressing very well. He has great potential, and we are hoping to match him with someone who has been waiting a while for a guide dog. He is a high-energy, adaptable boy who just lives in the moment and seems to love life. Always up for it, Magic is keen to take part in training and is super motivated. He enjoys finding objectives such as the crossing box on pelican crossings and vacant seats.



Magic loves to play and bounce around with toys and particularly loves a game of fetch and a good tickle. Magic is a very special boy who has captured my heart with his spirit and fun character. He has been an absolute pleasure to train and made my job very easy, but most of all, fun! He never fails to make me smile with his enthusiasm for everything and life is never dull with him around.

I have high hopes for Magic and his future partnership and believe that whoever gets him will be very lucky, as not only will they have a great working partner, but a fun and loyal friend.

# Puppy raising



## Vanessa Scott

Vanessa Scott here, the Canine Assisted Services Operations Manager for puppy raising in the North West region.

I've been on a rollercoaster ride of a Guide Dogs journey for a whopping 21 years, kicking things off as a Guide Dog Trainer. I've seen a lot of changes during this time but the one thing that remains the same is the overwhelming passion, dedication, and love from everyone to do everything possible to create guide dog partnerships. I'm in awe of this every single day - in both puppy raising and dog training, puppy raisers and fosterers.

Together, we're a dedicated team working tirelessly to transform energetic bundles of fur into incredible guide dogs that will change lives. From the early days of puppy raising to the moments these dogs step confidently into their roles as qualified guide dogs, our staff and volunteers are there every step of the way.

The first part of their guide dog journey is what I'd like to share with you in future - the different ways in which our Puppy Development Advisors, puppy raisers and puppy raising mentors teach our puppies a range of behaviours from Puppy Raising for Excellent Partnerships, our standardised way to raise and train guide dog puppies, which prepares them for training.

In the meantime, you can watch the puppy raising episode of ['The Journey of a Guide Dog'](#) to find out how we raise and train guide dog puppies and set them up for success.



## A terrific time at the Trafford Centre



On Tuesday 7 November, we were invited inside the Trafford Centre in Manchester to support 'Purple Tuesday' - an awareness day designed to support organisations which want to improve their customer service experience for disabled people and their families, carers, and support networks. We took over the food court area where we had an awareness stand, sold merchandise, and had Mark from our demo team who gave demonstrations throughout the day. We were supported by many of our wonderful volunteer puppy raisers and staff such as Guide Dog Trainers and Puppy Development Advisors. And of course lots of lovely dogs.

On the day, staff from the Trafford Centre were also given some practical sighted guiding training by Sharon in our Sighted Guide team. It's nice to see our longstanding relationship with The Trafford Centre continue and develop over time. Thank you to Di Moore, our local Community Fundraising Relationship Manager, and her colleagues for their support on the day.



## Supporting the local community



Our Preston Fundraising Group visited Places for People, where our volunteers and dogs met with lots of staff who all had a lovely time, learning about all things Guide Dogs. We plan to go back soon with some merchandise to sell and hope to be working with them in a volunteering capacity, as each employee receives two volunteering days to support a charity of their choice. The event raised over £400.

## Dine in the dark event

Lancashire housebuilders Barratt and David Wilson Homes recently hosted a 'dinner in the dark' event at their Centurion Village development to help raise awareness of Guide Dogs. To help understand a little what it's like to live (and eat) with a vision impairment, guests were given blindfolds to wear while attempting to navigate a three-course lunch.

The event in Leyland was attended by the Mayor and Mayoress of South Ribble, Cllr Chris Lomax, and Kim Lomax. In attendance from the Guide Dogs were Lynne Whittaker, Community Fundraising Relationship Manager, and guide dog owner Sue, and guide dog, Hero.



## Upcoming events with our fundraising groups and supporters

- On **Saturday 9 December** there will be a store collection in John Lewis at Cheadle supported by our South Manchester Fundraising Group.

If you'd like to come along to to the above event, please email Regional Community Fundraising Manager, Julie Wood:

- [julie.wood@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:julie.wood@guidedogs.org.uk)

# Volunteering

## Team update

This month we say goodbye and thank you to our two Volunteering Coordinators at Atherton. Many of you will know Hannah Laidlaw as she has been in this role for four years (almost to the day) and has met many of you at various volunteer recruitment events. Hannah isn't going far as she is moving into the Operations Volunteering Officer role in early December so you may still see her around. Again, a huge thank you goes to Hannah for everything she has done in the Volunteering Coordinator role, and we wish her well in her future career at Guide Dogs.

Gaynor Isherwood joined us back in January to focus on promoting the fosterer role at Atherton. Gaynor left at the end of November to spend more time with her family and pursue her love of travel. A big thank you goes to Gaynor, and again, I am sure you will see Gaynor at Atherton in the future as after her break, she intends to return as a volunteer!

While we have vacancies for Volunteering Coordinators, our Cheshire and Merseyside Volunteering Coordinator, Lucy Cropper, and Regional Volunteering Partner, Janet Harper, will be providing cover. You can get in touch with either Lucy or Janet by email ([lucy.cropper@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:lucy.cropper@guidedogs.org.uk) or [janet.harper@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:janet.harper@guidedogs.org.uk)).

# Volunteer events

## Festive social

We've reached that time of year again and would love to invite you to this year's Christmas social event. Details are as follows:

Date: Tuesday 12 December

Time: 4pm-7pm

Address: North West Regional Centre (Atherton), Gibfield Park, M46 0SU.

We will be providing some festive treats and refreshments and doing a quiz which will start at 5:30pm, so bring your Christmas knowledge! If you would like to join us, please email Hannah along with any dietary requirements: [hannah.laidlaw@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:hannah.laidlaw@guidedogs.org.uk).

If you would like to bring along your guide dog puppy or dog in training, please check in with your volunteer manager first and let Hannah know. Thank you for all your support and dedication in 2023 and we look forward to seeing many of you at the social.

## Christmas Wishes Concert

The Guide Dogs Christmas Wishes Concert takes place today, **Tuesday 5 December** at the breathtaking Manchester Cathedral. Soak up the atmosphere and enjoy inspiring stories and festive readings from celebrity guests including Countdown's Susie Dent as host and actor Martin Clunes. We'll have some of our iconic guide dogs, puppies and buddy dogs taking part in a procession with our staff, service users and volunteers.

Jamie Lawson will be performing a track from his latest album and you can sing along to your favourite carols with twin sopranos Classical Reflection, plus so much more!

You can attend virtually or in person. For more information please visit:

- [Christmas Wishes Concert](#)





## Media round-up



Did you see the dogs in training at Atherton featured on the BBC in early November? Not only did Guide Dog Trainer, Joy, and dogs in training make the BBC homepage, they also became the number one most watched video on the BBC on Friday 3 November! In case you missed it, you can still catch up on [Behind the scenes of a school for guide dogs](#) on the BBC website.

We also had a visit to the centre by the [Manchester Evening News](#) in September, which was featured online in the Manchester Evenings News, Wigan Today and the Leigh Journal.



Our media team are currently looking for puppy raisers or fosterers to send in pictures and quotes about their experience of volunteering with Guide Dogs.

If you are interested, please send your photos and quotes to Gemma Webster and let us know if you are happy for them to be used on social media, put forward for press interviews, or both:

- [gemma.webster@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:gemma.webster@guidedogs.org.uk)