

Scotland Regional Centre

Welcome to the new newsletter from the Scotland Regional Centre in Forfar.



I'm Kate Ellam, Canine Assisted Services (CAS) Operations Manager for Forfar. I'm thrilled that my team and I will be able to share behind the scenes of what we do - training dogs and creating partnerships - as well as what's happening locally from other departments such as Community Fundraising and Volunteering.

For me, it's an opportunity to shine a light on what goes into the journey of a guide dog - all the incredible work being done by our staff and volunteers, from puppy to partnership.

We'll do our best to keep you updated on local developments, as well as share opportunities for you to get involved with or to know one another better. You should hear from us around four times a year.

Future issues of our newsletter will show how everyone is playing their part to help people with sight loss to live the life they choose. So, whatever volunteering role(s) you have with Guide Dogs - this newsletter is for you.

Also, let us know [what you think about our first newsletter](#).

Thank you for your continued support.

Kate

CAS Operations Manager

Newsletter Highlights:

- [Dogs in training](#)
- [Getting to know Shirley Stewart](#)
- [Puppy raising](#)
- [Community fundraising](#)
- [Volunteering](#)
- [Media round-up](#)

Dogs in training



Strike a pose, Vogue

Vogue, a one-year and nine-month-old female German Shepherd has been focusing on training for an eye exam with her Guide Dog Trainer, David. All our dogs undergo a routine ophthalmic check after entering training to ensure they don't have anything affecting their vision. Vogue found her initial check a bit overwhelming, so the exam wasn't completed. Amazingly, David's son has printed us a 3D model of the equipment used by the Eye Specialists so we can utilise it in training to prepare our dogs for the exam. Vogue has been working hard with David on this, she is now a lot more comfortable with the equipment and is almost ready for a new eye check in December, go Vogue!

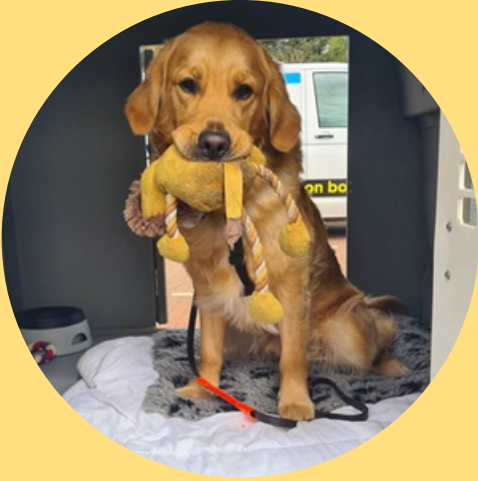
Sweet Candy

Candy is a four-year-old female yellow Labradoodle and qualified guide dog. Sadly, her guide dog owner recently passed away, so Candy has returned to Forfar for some refresher training with Guide Dog Trainer, Carol, before being partnered up with a new guide dog owner.

Her previous volunteer fosterers, **Claire and John**, have kindly taken Candy back, despite already having trainee Henley in their home. This has been a big positive for Candy as she has been able to return to a familiar home with people that she already has a strong bond with, helping to set her up for success during this period of transition. The lovely Candy has also been hanging out with her new 'brother' Henley, a Labrador x Golden Retriever who is almost fox red in colour. They like nothing better than lying at home enjoying a stuffed Kong.



Dogs in training



Rodney “Trotters” is feline fine

Rodney, a one-year and eight-month-old male Golden Retriever has been learning to work near cats with his Guide Dog Trainer, Gill. Rodney has a potential match with a guide dog owner who lives in an area with a lot of cats!

At first, Rodney found them quite interesting and distracting so he’s been working really hard with Gill to change this. He also took some time to get used to travelling in different vehicles, so he worked hard on this with Gill and the training van, as well as with his volunteer **fosterers, Shona and Manuel**, and their car.

Getting to know Shirley Stewart

Shirley Stewart

I have been at Guide Dogs for 33 years, starting in kennels then moving on to be a Guide Dog Trainer (GDT). During my time as a GDT, I had the opportunity to work alongside Dogs for Good and Alzheimer Scotland to train the first four dogs for the Dementia Dog Pilot, which was very rewarding. I then went on to become a Training and Behaviour Advisor and then onto my current role of Technical Learning Specialist (TLS), responsible for training the next generation of GDTs.

My passion is working with dogs and people and the TLS role fulfils this. It's great to be working with such enthusiastic learners who bring with them their own wealth of knowledge and experience that we can share in the team. I love walking, especially on a beach, exercise classes and socialising with friends over afternoon tea. You can't beat a good cake!



Puppy raising

Gillian Flynn



Have you ever wondered how we raise our puppies at Guide Dogs? Well, look no further.

I'm Gillian Flynn, the Canine Assistance Services (CAS) Operations Manager for puppy raising in Scotland and Northern Ireland. And through future updates in this new newsletter for Forfar (and surrounding areas), I will give you a glimpse into how we - staff and volunteers - raise and train guide dog puppies, so they can become life-changers.

I hope that by sharing what we do and why, we will help everyone to understand the journey of a guide dog, and how our training programmes and positive reinforcement training are the best way to support our dogs, from puppy to partnership.

Puppy raising isn't a walk in the park (although sometimes it is as part of socialising a puppy), it can be challenging, but ultimately extremely rewarding. Within puppy raising, our Puppy Development Advisors and volunteer puppy raisers make every effort to ensure that our guide dog puppies grow up to become well-behaved and confident dogs, so they're ready for training with support from their volunteer fosterers.

If you'd like a bit of an introduction to find out how we raise and train guide dog puppies and set them up for success, please watch the below video which is the puppy raising episode of our [‘The Journey of a Guide Dog’](#) series.



Switched on



Forfar Fundraising Group attended the Christmas Light Switch at the Forfar Mercat Cross in November. Despite the very wet weather, they had a successful event. The group raised over £450 from Guide Dogs merchandise and tombola tickets and over £250 in donations. The event was supported by Guide Dogs staff Volunteering Coordinator, Allison Wines, and Operations Volunteering Officer, Audrey Thomson, who was fundraising for Christmas presents for our dogs.

Aberdeen Christmas parade

Our Aberdeen Fundraising Group also attended their local Christmas Light Switch On parade in Aberdeen. The event was attended by guide dog owners, fundraising volunteers, and 'Hero', the Guide Dogs mascot.



Bruce and Breeze visit Lloyds Bank



The West Fife Fundraising Group visited long-term Name a Puppy supporters, Lloyds Bank, at Pitreavie in October and November. Staff popped by to say hello to our amazing dogs and volunteers and took the opportunity to purchase Guide Dogs merchandise. Puppy raiser, Aileen (pictured on the left), attended the event with her guide dog puppy, Breeze, who was accompanied by guide dog puppy, Bruce (also pictured left).

Upcoming fundraising events

As we approach the end of the year, our fundraising groups are busy at many Christmas fairs and card sales, and are looking forward to a busy start to 2024. They would love to welcome more of our volunteering community to join them in raising vital funds and awareness of Guide Dogs. Our fundraising groups in Dundee Perth, Forfar, Auchterarder, Arbroath, Peterhead, Montrose, West Fife, Stirling and Galashiels are **working to secure collections in Tesco stores in January and February 2024.**

If you'd like to meet your fellow volunteers and join in the fundraising action please email Andrea Williams.

- Andrea.Williams@guidedogs.org.uk

Volunteering



Allison Wines

Hello, I'm Allison Wines and I'm a Volunteering Coordinator based at the Scotland Regional Centre in Forfar working alongside my colleague Luke Walker. Together, we cover the whole of Scotland. Having relocated from Devon at the end of last year, I am still relatively new to the area and Guide Dogs.

I have been focusing on building relationships and making new connections within the local community to help support recruitment for our volunteering vacancies. We've been shouting our message near and far about the need for training dog fosterers in the Angus area and for those who love sport, you may have seen our banners at Strathmore Rugby Ground and Forfar Athletic Football Club. We're building some fantastic relationships and appreciate the support from the local community.

Throughout December, we'll also be advertising/promoting volunteer fostering in a variety of ways, including the Daily Record website, In Your Area ads, Facebook and the Nextdoor app. If you or anyone you know who might be **interested in becoming a volunteer fosterer**, please [visit our website](https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/ForfarFosterer) for further information.



With the support of the local Fundraising team, I have attended many events where I have met some wonderful volunteers. We really couldn't do this without you and your passion for supporting us is immeasurable. I'm looking forward to continuing my journey here at Guide Dogs and would love to meet many more supporters.

Volunteer events

Festive socials

We're planning to hold three Christmas volunteer social events across the region so come along for a cuppa and a blether:

- **Tuesday 12 December, 5pm-7pm** at RNIB Scotland, 24D Milton Road East, Edinburgh EH15 2NJ.
- **Wednesday 13 December, 5pm-7pm** at Forfar Regional Centre, Orchardbank Business Park, Dean Way, Forfar DD8 1WG.

Media round-up



Players from Arbroath FC's men's and women's teams paid a visit to our Scotland Regional Centre in Forfar, where they learned about our life-changing services and were 'put through their paces' by Guide Dog Trainers to raise awareness of the Guide Dogs Appeal last month. Their visit was covered by STV News at Six.

Buddy dog Sam was featured in The Sun as their 'Star of the week', after helping 20-year-old Adam from Musselburgh grow in confidence and independence. Sam, who was one of a litter generously funded by players of the People's Postcode Lottery, has had a huge impact on Adam and his family, particularly as Adam dealt with various health conditions on top of his vision impairment.



Speaking about Sam, Adam said: "He's changed my life for the better. When I was unwell, he helped by just being there for me and comforting me. We always say that getting Sam was the best thing we've ever done."