

London Community Team

Welcome to the new newsletter from the London Community Team.



I'm Luke Hughes, Canine Assisted Services (CAS) Operations Manager for London. I manage our technical teams - Guide Dog Trainers and Guide Dog Mobility Specialists - who train our dogs to become qualified guide dogs with the support of our fosterers who continue the hard work put in by our volunteer puppy raisers.

It's been a while since you may have heard from us as a team but we're hoping you'll hear from us more often - around four times a year. I feel it's important that we do our best to keep you - our volunteers - updated on what's happening locally as well as sharing opportunities for you to get involved or get to know one another better.

I hope future issues of our newsletter will give you a flavour of what's happening within your local team, activities from other departments, events, volunteer/service user stories and how we - staff and volunteers - support our dogs, from puppies to partnership.

So, whether you volunteer with our dogs or service users, fundraise, or support us behind the scenes - this newsletter is for everyone. Also, let us know [what you think about our first newsletter](#), we hope to improve with every issue.

And thank you for your ongoing support,

Luke Hughes
CAS Operations Manager

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Dogs in training

Rye



We'd like to introduce Rye who is a 20-month-old yellow Labrador who has been in training with us in the London team since early August this year with her trainer, Amy. Rye is top of the class and absolutely loves her training and learning new tasks. In fact, she loves it so much that she makes an excited little squeak when she is asked to target an objective like a chair or crossing box. She can be so excited to complete her task that she rushes a little, so Amy is working on slowing her down to have a calmer approach. She also enjoys her downtime and loves to unwind with zoomies around the room followed by a fuss from her trainer when a session ends. When she's not in the office she is being looked after by first-time **fosterers, Chris and Britt**, and their Cat "Chicken" who has become best friends with Rye!

Kika

Our next trainee guide dog, Kika, arrived with us in London a few weeks after Rye, at the end of August. Kika is currently being trained by [guide dog trainer Hayley](#) who describes her as a bundle of energy who never tires! She is always happy to do any training, especially if there is a food reward at the end of it. Her hobbies include getting belly rubs from her trainer and plenty of off-lead exercise in the park, especially after it's been raining so she can jump in every puddle. She's very happy on London buses and is getting used to other transport in the city. Kika can quickly and quietly settle down for naps in cafés when she and Hayley take a break from training, which her future guide dog owner will much appreciate. She has also settled in well with her **fosterers, Hattie and Nikko**, for whom Kika is their second guide dog in training. Kika was **puppy raised in Kent by volunteers, Jo and Matt**, who described their experience with her as heart-warming, joyful and fun, and they both felt privileged to be part of her guide dog journey.



Dogs in training



Val

Finally, we'd like to introduce 20-month-old yellow Labrador Val who has been in training since June. She is currently our smallest dog in training but what she lacks in size she certainly makes up for in character. Val is also lucky enough to have her brother, Fable, in training with her in the London office. Her trainer Maddie says Val absolutely loves finding objectives such as cafés and shops, and she is a dog of good taste as her current favourite destination is Waitrose.

Like many of our dogs, Val does have a vice, and hers are squirrels. So, Maddie is working hard to teach Val to be calm and relaxed around squirrels with lots of trips to the park on the hunt for them and progress is being made. She is **fostered by Veronica and Andrew** who have been fostering dogs in training for the London team for three years.

Getting to know Hayley Scott

Hayley Scott

Hi everyone, my name is Hayley and I'm one of the Guide Dog Trainers in the London Community Team. My training dogs follow the Standardised Training for Excellent Partnerships (STEP) pathway which focuses on positive reinforcement training.

My daily routine typically involves a variety of indoor sessions in our training room and outdoor sessions learning harness routes, testing public transport, exposing dogs to the busy London environment, and many more behaviours which are needed by future guide dogs. I love training the dogs and it's so rewarding seeing them qualify and change someone's life, giving them the independence to live the life they choose.

For my role, I work with a lot of our volunteer fosterers who look after our dogs throughout their training. It's great to see them enjoy fostering and how they develop their skills and confidence during their volunteering with us. We're so lucky to have such dedicated volunteers within our organisation.

Outside of work, I am a part of Leyton Netball Club which gives me a chance to push myself and play in a competitive league whilst being able to enjoy the sport I love.



Puppy raising

Helena Gibbons



My name is Helena Gibbons, and I am the Canine Assisted Services Operations Manager for puppy raising in the South East. Since joining Guide Dogs in 2005 as an apprentice Guide Dog Mobility Instructor (now called Guide Dogs Mobility Specialist), I have been fortunate to work in various roles that have shaped my passion for the work Guide Dogs do. Recently, I made the transition into the world of puppy raising, and I have been thoroughly enjoying the experience so far.

As most of my Guide Dogs career has focused on advanced training, matching and client training and support, it's been both lovely and interesting to learn more and better understand the beginning of the dogs' journey. I believe that strong connections and collaboration between puppy raising, and our training teams are vital for the success of creating partnerships. We can all do this by fostering a seamless flow of knowledge between puppy raising and dog training, which no doubt ensures the best outcomes for people living with sight loss. In future, I hope to give you a glimpse into puppy raising at Guide Dogs.

While this is particularly useful for volunteers in dog-related roles, I hope everyone else will find it just as fascinating. The world of puppy raising is not all cute puppies, it's hard work. We do everything possible to best prepare guide dog puppies for training with Guide Dog Trainers and support from their fosterers. 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.



‘Meet Guide Dogs’



Our volunteer community fundraisers in London have been out and about running 'Meet Guide Dogs' events across the capital. These events are enjoyed by the companies and community groups that we visit as well as the guide dog owners, puppy raisers and ambassador dog owners who take part.

The Bexley Fundraising Group recently visited the Hartford company where they raised a wonderful £445.98. And in return, Hartford match funded an extra 50% making £668.97 in total. Other meet and greet events in October included The Borough Welsh Chapel, Xodus and the Real Star Group. In November, we look forward to visiting SMBC Japanese Bank, Accenture UK, David Insall Associates, and the Green Goose pub.

If you know of any companies or groups that would like a similar visit, please contact Community Fundraising Relationship Manager, Gurdev Bal:

- gurdev.bal@guidedogs.org.uk

Community fundraising

Station success

We have held several successful collections at stations throughout London. Volunteers and their dogs from across London took part.



Top of the class

Guide Dogs were proud to be chosen as the Charity of the Year by Dulwich College Junior School this month. The school is hoping to name a puppy with the fundraising that they are going to undertake.

Chiswick Fundraising Appeal

In Chiswick, our volunteer fundraisers took part in a month's active campaign during October. Local volunteer Tim Mack said: "A big thank you for the support and donations across Chiswick this month from local people, businesses and especially the schools, from 'non-uniform' days to baking events to walks."

The group collected outside Chiswick station, outside the Eye Studio on the High Road, and stationed collection boxes in shops and a local vet.



Come join us!



We're always looking for people to join our happy community groups. If you would like to get a taste of what it is like to be involved, **why not come along to our collection at Paddington station on Tuesday 12 December?**

Alternatively, if you would like to join one of our Meet and Greets you are always welcome.

For more information, please contact our London Community Fundraising Relationship Manager, Gurdev Bal:

- gurdev.bal@guidedogs.org.uk

Volunteering



Desiree Nathanielsz

I'm Desi Nathanielsz and I have been the London Volunteering Coordinator for eight years. As well as promoting all our roles far and wide across London, I am here to support you wherever I can in your volunteering experience with Guide Dogs.

The focus for volunteering this year has been our puppy raiser and fosterer roles. In the London area, we only have puppy raisers in the outer corners of the city and the number of puppy raising homes is looking much healthier now, although there are still pockets where we are short of volunteers. The London team has had a steady flow of applicants for our training dog fosterer role, but we still need more.

We are trying to make the most of the large number of corporates based in London and recruit their employees through volunteering fairs and 'lunch and learn' events. We have visited Wellcome Trust, Francis Crick Institute and Google and have upcoming events at Schroders and SMBC Bank. If you think that your company would be interested in a 'lunch and learn' to meet our dogs and hear about our volunteering opportunities, then please get in touch with me (details below).

We have just attended a volunteering fair at UCL to promote our [My Sighted Guide](#) role and will be at Hounslow and Ealing's fair too. We are in urgent need of sighted guides in areas such as Harrow and across North London where we have service users who would love to be able to make use of this service.

I would like to say a huge thank you to each and every volunteer who supports the London team. Your time, energy and passion are greatly appreciated and I am looking forward to meeting more of you in person at events next year.

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Media round-up



[Luton Today](#) and the [Leighton Buzzard Observer](#) announced that staff at Whipsnade Zoo received sighted guide training as part of a new partnership with Guide Dogs. Guide dogs are not permitted in the zoo, in accordance with BIAZA guidelines, because it has free-roaming animals such as mara, wallabies and Chinese water deer living on its 600 acres. Nevertheless, the venue works hard to ensure the venue is accessible to all.

Showcase Cinema de Lux Reading partnered with Guide Dogs to host an adorable group of puppies at the cinema, so they could take part in an important training session for their development. Read more via [Essex TV](#).



Journalist and guide dog owner Emily Davison has written a piece in the [Wimbledon Times](#), detailing the problems she encounters as a person with a vision impairment living in London. Emily describes the biggest issues as escalators, narrow streets, pavement furniture, rush hour public transport and walking past pubs after 5pm. The story has also appeared in other local London titles.