

Newcastle Community Team

Welcome to the new newsletter from the Newcastle Community Team.



I'm Jane Louth, Canine Assisted Services (CAS) Operations Manager for the North East. My role is to manage the Guide Dog Trainers and Guide Dog Mobility Specialists - our technical staff who train our dogs and get them ready for partnerships with service users. This wouldn't be possible without the hard work of our volunteers, which starts from day one with breeding dog holders, through to puppy raisers and fosterers.

I am delighted to tell you that for the first time, the North East region is currently raising 160 puppies, which is a fantastic achievement. Last year, we peaked at around 130 puppies. As you know, everyone at Guide Dogs has been working really hard to breed, train and match more guide dogs, so this is brilliant news - and an achievement that would not be possible without the support of our volunteers. And our Newcastle site is now fully up and running and is making a big difference to the puppies and dogs who come in.

Aside from our dogs, a great deal has been happening within Volunteering, including a lot of activity from our volunteer fundraisers (click on the links on the right-hand side to find out). You should hear from us, including updates from the wider volunteering community, around four times a year. Each edition will give you an insight into flavour of what's happening within your local team, activities from other departments, events, volunteer/service user stories and how staff and volunteers support our dogs, from puppy to partnership. Please [let us know what you think about our first newsletter](#), we hope to improve with every issue.

Jane, CAS Operations Manager

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Dogs in training

Merlot



Merlot is a huge foodie! She loves cooperative care, especially the bucket game as it involves lots of kibble. She's a sweet girl and chills out in a pen next to her best friend Fenton, and they love passing toys to each other.

When working, Merlot is very good at passing distractions, particularly dogs. She is currently working on standing in a straight position at the kerb edge. When Merlot finds herself in a café situation, she can take a bit of time to settle as she stares at her handler, hoping for kibble.

Merlot also has a lot of energy when she's not working. She enjoys off-lead exercise and has a brilliant recall. She loves play sessions with her dog wellbeing volunteers when she's not training with her trainer, Maxine.

She is a very bright little girl, who is almost ready to move to the next stage of her training. Maxine will soon wear a blindfold to test that Merlot is ready to move on.

Carol

Carol is currently our only Labradoodle cross. She requires a lot of grooming because she is extra fluffy and loves to be cuddled and fussed over. She loves play sessions with her best friend Kenny. Squeaky teddies are her favourite.

Carol is in the early stages of her training where she's learning the basics for around nine weeks. She's settled very well within the office and with the other training dogs, and staff too. In training, she's happy to put her head in the harness on cue, and is stopping at downkerbs and upkerbs on cue. She's also learning to locate objects and enjoys finding a chair on cue too. Overall, Carol is a good all-rounder with lots of potential to do well.



Dogs in training



Annie

Annie is nearly at the end of her training programme with her trainer Lucy. Annie loves off-lead exercise and playing with toys. She is great at working with someone in a blindfold and has been used many times at site demonstrations where she has shown off her skills!

Annie is well established now with all guiding tasks and will soon transition to training with a Guide Dog Mobility Specialist, who will start to look at suitable partnership matches for her. She'll then move to the Partnership Preparation stage where the extra work will be done to ensure the chosen match is successful. Well done, Annie, you're nearly there.

Getting to know Lucy Sullivan

Lucy Sullivan

I'm Lucy, a Guide Dog Trainer working from the Newcastle office. I joined Guide Dogs because it was a great opportunity to work with people and dogs. In the past, I have had to choose between the two so never felt like I had quite found the right job for me.

The best part of the job is the variety. I enjoy being in control of planning what guiding routes I should take my dogs on next. I also enjoy coaching people to handle their specific dogs. I love seeing how the dogs and their fosterers develop together and how the dogs mature from bouncy puppies into working guide dogs.

I feel very lucky to be part of the Newcastle team. There is always someone there to bounce ideas off when facing tricky training challenges.

My favourite thing to train is food manners. It's amazing to watch how in the space of a few months a dog can go from scrabbling and pulling towards a tiny piece of dropped kibble to confidently walking over an entire cheeseburger!



Puppy raising

Janet Champion

Hi there!

I'm Janet Champion, the Canine Assisted Services (CAS) Operations Manager for puppy development in the North East Region at Guide Dogs. I kicked off my journey with Guide Dogs back in January 1995 as an Apprentice Guide Dog Mobility Instructor, spending 14 fantastic years in that role (now known as a Guide Dog Mobility Specialist). Initially based at the former Middlesbrough Training Centre, I later moved to Leeds.

In the early days, my Guide Dog Mobility Specialist role involved the advanced training of dogs, matching them with people with sight loss, and nurturing their partnerships. Since 2009, I've taken on various management and supervisory roles within the training department. Two years ago, I jumped at the chance to join puppy raising, and I can honestly say it's been a rewarding experience. Working with our motivated and positive team, not to mention our incredible volunteers, brings me immense joy.

And I want to share the joy of puppy raising with volunteers outside of puppy raising. It's really fascinating. In future, staff and our volunteer puppy raising team will show you how we put our Puppy Raising for Excellent Partnerships (PREP) training programme into practice, and the different ways in which we help set up our puppies for success.

In the meantime, you can gain a wonderful insight by watching the puppy raising episode of '[The Journey of a Guide Dog](#)' to find out how we raise and train guide dog puppies.



Accenture raise more than £10,000 for Guide Dogs



Newcastle-based technology company Accenture celebrated the end of their Charity of the Year Partnership with Guide Dogs by presenting the Newcastle Fundraising Group with a cheque for £10,506.73. The Accenture team threw themselves into fundraising (including a trek up Scafell Pike) and fully understood all that Guide Dogs does to support people with sight loss. We are very grateful to the local team for supporting with their engagement and demonstrating the full breadth of our services. This may be the end of our official partnership but the start of a friendship with Guide Dogs for years to come.

Guide Dogs chosen by the University of Newcastle Students' Union RAG

We're thrilled to have been selected by the Raising and Giving (RAG) group at the University of Newcastle's Students' Union as one of the charities they're supporting this year. They kicked off their fundraising with a Halloween Quiz and have lots planned for the students to get involved with. In February, we'll be doing a 'Meet Guide Dogs' event and would welcome the support of local guide dog owners, puppy raisers and fosterers. If you're interested in sparing an hour to help, please contact Sue Robinson, Community Fundraiser Relationship Manager, for more details:

- sue.robinson@guidedogs.org.uk



Puppy Hattie helps with merchandising

The Sunderland and South Shields Group have recently begun trading with volunteers Debbie, Helen and Wendy, calling on guide dog puppy in training Hattie to lead the way with merchandising. Selling Guide Dogs merchandise is a great way to raise additional funds and attract people over.

TEDxNewcastle

Chester Le Street and Durham Guide Dogs Group were invited to TEDxNewcastle on 25 November at the Glasshouse. With around 1,200 attendees, it provided great exposure for Guide Dogs and an opportunity for the group to hear some inspirational talks from speakers including Dr Chris van Tulleken.

All the threes

At the end of September, volunteers, corporate partners, and the local team supported our street collection in the centre of Newcastle. We had more than 80 people collecting for us over the three days that we were there. It was great to put Guide Dogs on the map and raise £3,333 in the process.

To continue the theme of three, we had three of our supporters wearing our iconic dog suits - three golden Labradors ready to meet the people of the North East!





Guide Dogs Appeal

Our team once again threw themselves into the Guide Dogs Appeal with a Halloween-themed bake off and wellbeing walk, raising more than £70 in the office. We encouraged fundraisers across the region to 'Get Together' for Guide Dogs to fundraise in their own way. Every penny makes a difference. Young local service user and fundraiser Rex was featured in this year's campaign. You can access his story at ['Why we fundraise.'](#)

Upcoming events and collections

December is a busy month for groups and there are more than 20 events that our local groups are attending across the region. We'd always welcome others from the Guide Dogs family to join us, if you have an hour to spare.

- Wednesday 6 December - Quorum Park Benton Christmas Market
- Saturday 9 December - Bethany Church, Houghton-Le-Spring
- February (date TBC) - Meet Guide Dogs University of Newcastle

For further details, please contact Sue Robinson, Community Fundraiser Relationship Manager:

- sue.robinson@guidedogs.org.uk
- 0191 463 2338

Intergroup meeting

Our next intergroup meeting for lead volunteers from our local fundraising groups will be on **Friday 1 December, 11am** at the Newcastle office.

Volunteering



Shannon Butler

Hello! I'm Shannon Butler and I am the Volunteering Coordinator in Newcastle. I started this role in September, so I am still quite new to Guide Dogs but so far, I have loved getting to know the Newcastle team and meeting lots of our wonderful volunteers and dogs at different events.

My role includes thinking of new, creative ways to attract and onboard volunteers, engaging with the public and our current volunteers, and planning/running events such as our volunteer socials.

One of our current priorities for Newcastle is to expand our new puppy raising scheme in North Northumberland and the Scottish borders. Puppy raisers provide our puppies with the vital foundation for their future role as a guide dog by providing one of our puppies a loving home for 12-16 months and guiding our puppies through training, socialisation, and the introduction to new environments and experiences. This is a fantastic role which is both rewarding and vital to our charity. We have been advertising across the region for this role but are specifically in need of puppy raisers across North Northumberland.

We are also busy recruiting for fosterers to look after the dogs after they leave their puppy raisers and start training. In Newcastle, we are looking for training dog fosterers to provide homes for the dogs as they go into early training for around six months.

We are also currently looking to onboard short-term, advanced training dog fosterers in the Teesside area including **Guisborough, Redcar, Acklam, Ingleby Barwick and Stokesley**. This role involves taking care of a dog for around eight weeks whilst they embark on their journey to become a life-changer. This role would involve one of our Guide Dog Trainers collecting and dropping off your training dog each day from your home, so this role would be ideal for anyone who works from home or is retired. You'll get to see the progress the dog is making in their training and be a vital part of their journey, without the commitment of looking after a dog full-time.

Volunteering

Finally for promoting volunteering at Guide Dogs, we have been dedicating lots of our time to recruit new fundraisers and fundraising group coordinators in specific areas, including Morpeth and Wansbeck. We are putting a lot of effort in behind the scenes to think of new and imaginative ways to fill these roles. If you have any ideas, please let us know, in the meantime watch this space.

Partnering with our local fundraising teams, I have attended many events where I have met some wonderful volunteers, guide dog owners and guide dogs. Over the past couple of months, I have visited Accenture, the Metrocentre, Northumberland Street and Tesco Bank alongside our fundraisers to talk to the public about getting involved with Guide Dogs and raising awareness for our charity.



Volunteer events

Festive social

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

Date: Friday 8 December

Time: 2-4pm

Address: Newcastle Cricket Club, Osborne Avenue, Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE2 1JS

This event is to say a big thank you to our amazing volunteers for all the support you give to Guide Dogs, we couldn't do it without you all. During the afternoon, we will be hearing from one of our wonderful speakers at 3pm and there will be festive treats and refreshments for you to enjoy. There will also be Guide Dogs merchandise and a Christmas quiz to take part in, so make sure to bring your Christmas knowledge!

If you're planning to attend, please let me know so I have an idea of how many to expect, as well as any dietary requirements: shannon.butler@guidedogs.org.uk.

Please also let me know if you will be accompanied by a guide dog, or a dog in training, again so we are aware of numbers, or if you have any other accessibility requirements. If you are fostering/puppy raising, please remember to check in with your volunteer manager to ensure it is suitable for your dog to attend the event.

Fosterer social

There will also be a festive fosterer social on **Monday 11 December, 5:30-7pm** at our Newcastle Centre in Gosforth Business Park, NE12 8EG. This get together is an opportunity for any of our dog fosterers to meet each other and some of our staff. If you would like to attend, please email Karen Jamieson, Operations Volunteering Officer: karen.jamieson@guidedogs.org.uk.

I'm really looking forward to continuing my journey here at Guide Dogs and I look forward to meeting you all in the future.

Thank you for all your support and dedication in 2023,
Shannon

Media round-up



The mother of a four-year-old girl recently told BBC Radio Newcastle how Guide Dogs has changed their lives (the piece begins at 3 hours, 11 minutes and 57 seconds). Little Ruby has been attending sessions to help her confidence, which the family say have been a massive help.

Guide dog owner Karen, who is also a volunteer puppy raiser, was interviewed by the Newcastle Chronicle ahead of International Day of Persons with Disabilities on Sunday 3rd December. The article highlights Karen's experience with sight loss, and how her guide dog Gyp helps her with her independence living and working in Newcastle.



Would you like to share photos of your events, puppies, foster dogs or meet-ups for the team to share on social media? Send your images through to us with a description of what's in the image and keep an eye on Guide Dogs North East on Facebook and @GuideDogs_NE on Instagram to:

northeastsocial@guidedogs.org.uk