



North West Regional Centre

Welcome to the Atherton newsletter.



Hello from the North West Regional Centre. I'm Caroline Charnock, Canine Assisted Services (CAS) Operations Manager here in Atherton.

In this edition, I have a heart-warming story to bring you from Joy Murray, a Guide Dog Trainer who is training a Labrador named after her by her late mum.

We also have an update on Snowy and Ruth, two of our dogs in training with Kim Brooking, and Mack, a dog in training with Nina Swindells.

Throughout April (and beyond), we are very much looking forward to 'Make Every Cuppa Count' and we hope to see some of you at these events - read on for more about how you can take part.

Finally, we would like to send a big thank you to all of our volunteers for your ongoing support in the North West.

Caroline Charnock
CAS Operations Manager

Dogs in training

Snowy and Ruth

By Kim Brooking, Guide Dog Trainer



Snowy and Ruth are two of my current dogs in training. Snowy is a black Labrador x Golden Retriever and Ruth is a Golden Retriever. They have both been in training for around 10 weeks and have very different personalities, but equally love life and are enjoying their training.

Snowy is quite a laid-back boy who loves a nice cuddle and food, so he thinks training is amazing because lots of treats and cuddles are involved! Ruth also loves people and a good fuss, but soft toys are her favourite thing; a little play in between training sessions or when she gets to a destination such as the shop is what really motivates her.

Ruth and Snowy are also the best of friends, so when they are not training, they love a good run together... however, Ruth also loves mud and puddles so often comes back looking the same colour as Snowy!

Fingers crossed both keep progressing well with their training and go on to make fantastic guide dogs.

Mack

By Nina Swindells, Guide Dog Trainer



Mack is a Golden Retriever who is in training here at Atherton. He is a lovely boy but one of his challenges was that he appeared to show a stopping behaviour when wanting to go in a particular direction or into a shop/doorway.

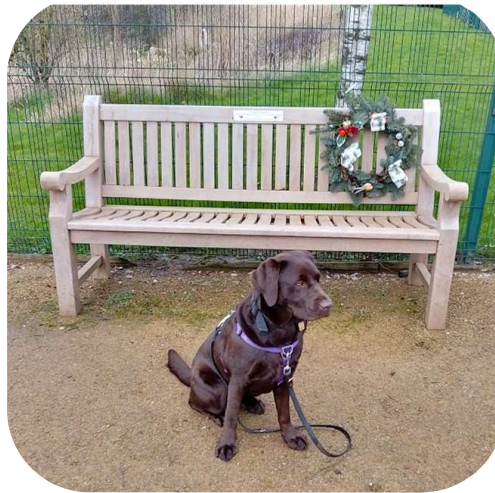
With Mack we used short, incentive routes where he would find a bench or a crossing point. To begin with, we would start the walk at the end point so he knew where the reward would be and could easily find it again. This gave him the focus and motivation to keep moving towards the destination. It was important not to rush this stage, and use lots of positive reinforcement at his end, destination point. This helps us to extend or amend the route later.

It is important with these types of behaviours (stopping) to be aware of how the handler reinforces and at what point. What we don't want to happen is that the dog slows and stops one day and then is rewarded via a lure with food to keep moving. Most dogs will quickly learn in these situations that stopping equals food. But with some careful training, Mack has come on leaps and bounds and is doing really well here in training.

Staff spotlight

Meet Joy and Joy

By Joy Murray



Back in early 2023, my mother Elaine Webster (Puppy Development Supervisor) went to view a litter of chocolate Labradors in the view to purchasing a few to bring onto the Guide Dogs journey.

Unbeknown to me, my mother named one of these puppies 'Joy', after me. My mum retired in June 2023 after a lifelong career with Guide Dogs. At the beginning of July 2023, Mum very suddenly passed away in her sleep. She never got to enjoy her retirement and the ripple effect of her passing still stays with our family, friends, and colleagues.

When Joy was put forward to enter training, I asked if I could train her. I have been a Guide Dog Trainer for nearly 20 years and started in Dog Care when I left school aged 16. As I am now in a role of Guide Dog Training Supervisor, my core job is to supervise and support Guide Dog Trainers within my team - but this was too good an opportunity to miss.

In all my years I have never trained a chocolate Labrador as we stopped breeding them many years ago. This will be an amazing opportunity as well as a privilege - no pressure at all to succeed with my namesake!

I have had a dog with the same name as me before but never one actually named after me. Joy entered training on 26 February 2024 and after great conversations with her Puppy Development Advisor (Jess Jarvis) and her wonderful puppy raiser, we are ready to start Joy's guide dog journey.

Hopefully, we will get the opportunity to update everyone soon on our progress.

Puppy raising

Welcome to North West puppy raising By Vanessa Scott, CAS Operations Manager



In January, we welcomed Jayne Allen into the North West puppy raising department (pictured above). Many of you may already know Jayne as she has worked in North West Regional Centre here at Atherton for many years as a Guide Dog Trainer as well as in Dog Wellbeing. Within a few short weeks, Jayne has proved to be a dedicated member of the team; she has been out and about working alongside the Puppy Development Advisors using her skills, experience, and knowledge to support our puppy raisers. Jayne will be with us in Puppy Development for 16 months before she will return to her Guide Dog Trainer role.

In this edition of the newsletter, we will be looking at stopping behaviours. This is when a pup continues to stop unnecessarily during lead walks. We will think about what is a normal behaviour, and what are the implications on a pup's progression as a guide dog if the behaviour becomes a habit. We will look at some possible causes, and how we might alleviate this and prevent the stopping behaviour from becoming engrained.

What is stopping and why is it a problem?

All of our puppies like watching and taking the world in. This is important particularly for young puppies but can also be important for some dogs in adolescence. It's how they learn about the world around them - so not all stopping is a problem. What can become a challenge however is if the puppy stops and can't refocus on you when it is time to move on. If this stopping behaviour is practiced repeatedly, it can soon become habit-forming, and once the puppy learns to stop, it can be difficult to modify and could impede on the puppy's progression into formal training.

When a guide dog puppy progresses to their formal training, they are trained to walk confidently in their harness and to guide with positive tension through the handle. This is so that when a dog is partnered and working with a guide dog owner, the owner can feel the movements of the dog through the handle as they safely negotiate through their environment.

If undesirable stopping behaviours show up, it can leave the guide dog owner disorientated and uncertain as to why their dog has stopped; in time the guide dog owner may lose confidence and in some cases the partnership may have to end.

Why might a puppy stop?

There are a number of reasons for dogs to stop, but the most common are:

- **Health:** Discomfort from growing pains or other health related problems.
- **Worry:** If they are worried by something or somewhere they can try to avoid going towards, near or into that thing.
- **Learned:** They learn that if they stop, they can stay near something interesting (the park or near another dog) or that if they stop someone gets out something they like (usually food or toys but it can also be attention) to lure them to move.

How can I help prevent stopping becoming a problem for my puppy?

There are several things you can do if you think your puppy is likely to stop in a certain situation or place, but in the first instance try to avoid returning to the situation/place until you've spoken with us.

However, if it happens whilst you are out and about, these are our top tips:

- Always keep yourself and your puppy safe. If your puppy stops anywhere on a road, train crossing or somewhere similar get yourselves to the other side in the safest/quickest way possible.
- If you think your puppy has been startled and it is safe to do so, give your puppy chance to recover and then continue on your way.
- If you are safe, avoid using food or toys as a lure to getting your puppy to start walking or catch you up. Instead, make a funny noise, show interest in something or someone else - you could bend down as if you are going to pick something up, or suddenly be very interested in a wall. Puppies don't like to miss out, so your pup may decide to investigate! If they do, you can take advantage of this movement and keep going, rewarding them for moving with you (only once they are moving).
- If you notice your puppy is stopping more frequently, you are having to pretend to be interested in something a lot, or your puppy is ignoring/taking longer to get moving then let us know, we are here to help and support you. The earlier we know, the better. Share as much information as you have but don't worry if you're not sure what we need to know, we have a diary template that we can send you to get more information and help us work out what's most likely to help.

Thank you for taking the time to read about stopping behaviours. If your puppy is stopping unnecessarily on walks or if there are any other behaviours that your puppy is displaying that are causing you concern, please speak to your PDA or Guide Line (0800 78 11 444) who will be able to advise.

In case you missed it: watch the recording of our recent 'Royal Canin diet for guide dog puppies' webinar, which is now available [on-demand](#).

Tea Party is back, but with a new name! Introducing... Make Every Cuppa Count



Do you love to bake or just eat cake? Then 'Make Every Cuppa Count' when you host a tea party, coffee morning or bake sale for Guide Dogs. Make Every Cuppa Count is our year-round campaign which asks supporters to host a fundraiser for us either at home, at work, at school or even in their community. Even though we promote this campaign all year round, the official day to Make Every Cuppa Count is on Friday 19 April - so mark it in your calendars!

If you would like to take part, you can sign up on our website at guidedogs.org.uk/cuppa to receive a jam-packed fundraising pack which is filled with lots of resources to help make your fundraiser a success - it's a piece of cake!

Bootcampers car wash

One of our third-party fundraisers based in Tamworth and Lichfield recently held a car wash and raised £1200. This is in addition the £5,000 already raised which has contributed to a Name a Puppy called Mali. Five members of the group are also running this year's London Marathon for Guide Dogs in April!

A great start to 2024



Our North Staffs group collected an amazing £561.78 at Tesco Longton in Stoke-on-Trent on the first Saturday in January, a great first collection of the year for them.

Here is rehomed Ambassador dog, Shadow looking his very best to attract as many donations as possible.

Congratulations!



A huge thank you to our Chorley Fundraising Group and Bolton Fundraising group - they have both raised another £13,000 each which will fund a guide dog into a partnership with someone who has sight loss. Thanks to these hard-working volunteers, guide dogs Warner (left) and Grady (right) are now fully funded to support someone with sight loss for their working dog careers.

Community fundraising events near you

Come along and join us at one of our upcoming Make Every Cuppa Count events - all are welcome! Here are just a few:

- Monday 15 April at The Cotton Tree, 15 Prince Street, Bolton BL1 2NP from 1.30pm to 3.30pm.
- Saturday 20 April at Guide Dogs North West Regional Centre, Gibfield Park Avenue, M46 0SU from 10am to 12noon.
- Saturday 4 May at Aughton Village Hall, Winifred Lane, Ormskirk, L39 5DH from 2pm to 4pm.

#SightLossStories

Meet Eliza and her Habilitation Specialist, Lindsey



In January, a North West family featured in the BBC Lifeline Appeal for Guide Dogs.

When Eliza was four months old, her parents noticed her eyes kept drifting inwards. At nine months, she was registered as blind. Mum Lauren didn't know where to turn until she saw one of our TV adverts and phoned Guide Dogs to ask if any support was available for Eliza.

The family now have regular visits from Lindsey, who teaches Eliza how to learn about her environment and provides support and reassurance for the whole family.

You can read more about Eliza's story on our [website](#) or watch our BBC Lifeline Appeal with TV star Wendi Peters [via the BBC](#).

Our trusted corporate partner Petplan UK matched the support given to the BBC Lifeline Appeal up to £20,000.

Volunteering



Hello, I wanted to introduce myself. My name is Rachel Patrick, and I am the new Volunteering Coordinator for the North West Regional Centre, covering Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Cumbria and the Isle of Man.

I am really looking forward to meeting as many of you as possible when I am travelling around the area. If you can help me recruit volunteers to the following vacancies (amongst others) I would love to hear from you!

- Fosterers for Atherton dogs in training (evenings and weekends).
- Puppy raisers throughout Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Cumbria.
- Collection Box Coordinators throughout the area.
- Fundraising Group Coordinators in Bury, Penrith, Carlisle, Oldham, Isle of Man and Rochdale.
- Equipment Coordinator (Atherton) seasonal (mainly April-September) Mondays and Fridays.

If you want to get in touch, please drop me a line at rachel.patrick@guidedogs.org.uk.

In my short time I have been in this role, I have been inspired by the volunteers I have met and look forward to meeting many more of you over the coming weeks and months. Thank you for everything you do!

Dates for your diary

- The [Big Help Out](#) is back for 2024! On Friday 7 June from 4pm we will be opening our doors at Atherton for our Big Help Out Event. This is a drop-in session to learn more about our volunteer roles and meet staff, volunteers and of course our dogs.
- Know a volunteer who deserves extra recognition? This year our **Local Volunteer Awards (LVAs)** are moving to early September. Look out for more information during Volunteers' Week (3-9 June), but in the meantime why not nominate a fellow volunteer for a 'Pat on the Back' for going that extra mile in their volunteer role. Please note that the nomination route for the LVAs this year will also be via a 'Pat on the Back' nomination. Further information and a nomination form can be found on the ['Saying thank you'](#) page on the Volunteer Information Point.

Media round-up

Dragons' Den



You may have seen our lovely Lancashire-based puppy raiser Gemma on BBC One's 'Dragons' Den', sharing how raising guide dog puppies inspired her to start her own business of edible greeting cards for pet dogs. Did she secure an investment from any of the dragons? Find out via [BBC iPlayer](#).

BBC Radio Manchester



BBC Radio Manchester reported live from the North West Regional Centre, Atherton on 5 February. They launched their 'Make a Difference Awards', with a new category especially for animals that change lives. They featured the work of Guide Dogs to showcase the calibre of entrants they are looking for. Dog in training, Ruth, also made an appearance to greet presenter, Richard!

What did you think of our newsletter? [Tell us](#). Your feedback will let us know if we're on the right track or if we need to improve. Thank you.