



Guide Dogs Futures: raising puppies FAQs

Thank you for your questions. Please note that any specific questions relating to your volunteering or outside the panellists specialist areas will be followed up individually either by your volunteer manager or relevant staff member. The below questions and answers relate to the 'Raising puppies' webinar topics.

Sight loss

Is Macular degeneration growing and expecting to be the greatest growth area?

Macular degeneration is currently the leading cause of sight loss amongst registered blind and partially sighted people and this trend doesn't appear to be changing any time soon. Nearly 1.5m people in the UK have macular disease. It affects people of all ages. Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is the most common condition, generally affecting people over the age of 55.

Just interested in why numbers of people being affected by sight loss will double by 2050?

Research shows that the prevalence of sight loss and blindness is projected to increase with [demographic ageing](#) to approximately 4 million people by 2050.

Our dog services

What is the difference between a "buddy" and a "companion" dog?

The key difference is that Buddy dogs are for children and young people while companion dogs are for over 18's for whom a Guide Dog isn't wholly suitable.

You can read more information here:

- [Buddy Dogs](#)
- [Companion Dogs](#)

How long is the Guide Dog waiting list? How many people are waiting?

On average, the waiting time for a guide dog is 14 months, but some people will wait longer depending on their specific needs and requirements. Before Covid, we had worked hard to reduce the number of people waiting for a guide dog from around 900 in 2017 to around 700 in 2019. The current approximate number is 800.

Ethos

If you really value us, why are you telling us to do more and not asking us first?

We believe you are referring to the Ethos questionnaires. These have been launched to our volunteers following extensive research and review of how we measure behaviour within the organisation. Previous work by the University of Nottingham found the benefit of contacting volunteers directly for information, rather than getting this information second hand through staff. We also have heard from many volunteers that they are very pleased Guide Dogs are contacting them for information. If you have concerns about the information being asked please speak to your volunteer manager in the first instance. We do really value the views and input from our Puppy Raisers as the ones caring for our dogs which is why we are so keen to get information from you.

The questionnaires include ratings for statements like "Returns directly to you if startled or frightened". It is not possible to accurately answer items like these if the circumstance has never arisen (i.e. if the puppy has never been startled or frightened when off lead). It should be possible to skip questions for which there is no valid answer - or to indicate that it cannot be answered.

Each question is scored on a 'Never' to 'Always' scale, so if you have never seen the behaviour or been in that situation you can click 'Never'. Unfortunately, all questions require an answer for further calculations that we do with the data, and also we need to know the difference between 'Never' and a question just being missed. I hope that answers your question and thanks for completing the questionnaires for us, we very much appreciate it.

'Never' [as an answer within the questionnaire] is potentially misleading - if the situation arose, the behavior might arise as well.

We are looking to improve this in the future with the potential for a not applicable option, but we need a more sophisticated survey system to support this and unfortunately, it's not a quick fix. With the addition of a free text box this should enable volunteers to write in the box if a question was not applicable for the time being. Hope that answers your question.

Will volunteers be able to add information about the pup not included in the current behaviour questionnaire? And will we get feedback from it to help us with our pups?

We are getting a free text box added to allow volunteers to add more information, however we need to test that the data can be extracted correctly before we can add it to the questionnaires. The results from the questionnaires get exported to our database and here staff will be able to view questionnaire information and feedback to puppy raisers and volunteers if they believe there is a specific area of focus needed.



Puppy Raising for Excellent Partnerships (PREP)

How can you socialise a guide dog puppy during Lockdown?

We've published [puppy socialisation guidance](#) on our website. It includes links to [podcasts and videos on dog welfare](#).

PREP mentions consulting staff and volunteers. Not a lot of the Puppy Raisers in the North-East appear to have been included. I left the Puppy Walking Consulting Group (PWCG) for the North-East due to lack of listening to us! The PREP project team engaged with PWCG groups in 2019 and 2020. From these PWCG groups volunteers put themselves forward to become further involved and form focus groups. With different parts of the project there has been a varying number of these volunteers and others involved with shaping PREP. A group of North East volunteers specifically were involved in piloting one of our resources.

How many Puppy Raisers have you consulted?

The PREP project team engaged with PWCG groups in 2019 and 2020. From these PWCG groups volunteers put themselves forward to become further involved and form focus groups. With different parts of the project there has been a varying number of these volunteers and others involved with shaping PREP. Overall there have been around 100 Puppy Raisers who have directly inputted to parts of the project. There have however been a group of around 20 puppy raisers who have been more actively engaged throughout.

Please can you give us some recommendations of books we can read so we can learn more about PREP?

Information and guidance specifically relating to raising a Guide Dog puppy is being updated in PREP. For wider reading that may help Puppy Raisers to understand the approaches we take on puppy raising and dog training we would suggest the following books:

- **Puppy specific:** Life skills for puppies by Helen Zulch and Daniel Mills
- **Living and interacting with dogs:** Helping minds meet by Helen Zulch and Daniel Mills
- **Reading and understanding dog body language:** Doggie Language: A dog lovers guide to understanding your best friend by Lili Chin
- **Teaching and training:** Don't shoot the dog by Karen Pryor

Does PREP take account of the extra challenges for everyone due to the COVID-related restrictions?

We are continually taking the challenges posed by COVID-19 into account with everything we do (e.g. the rollout of PREP to volunteers has been pushed back by

six months (originally we planned to launch in December/January) to give staff more time to learn.

Can volunteer Puppy Socialisers at the National Breeding Centre (NBC) also access the PREP and or STEP training?

At the moment no. PREP and Standardised Training for Excellent Partnerships (STEP) provide information and resources relevant to puppies that are at the puppy development and early training phases. Some of this information may be useful to volunteers who work our puppies and dogs outside of these age ranges and we will continue to work with our colleagues to share this information. Hannah Voss, The training and behavior consultant based at the NBC is looking specifically at the needs of the roles based there and the training that is available and most appropriate.

How long will it take for Puppy Raisers to complete PREP training?

PREP is the programme all puppies will follow from July. It provides up-to-date advice and guidance to puppy raisers before a puppy arrives and throughout the time a puppy is with a Puppy Raiser. As an organisation we are committed to providing ongoing learning and development to all our volunteers therefore there is no specified end date.

What's the advice for puppies who are arriving with Puppy Raisers soon? Do we start with the "old" training regime and then move over to PREP later or start with PREP as best we understand it now?

Puppy Development Advisors (previously Puppy Training Supervisors) are currently receiving PREP training, and are encouraged to share learning and any updates to practise with their schemes as soon as this is appropriate and practical. Learning in the form of written, audio and video materials will be available for volunteers to access directly from July, but Puppy Development Advisors will also be delivering training via puppy classes and webinars. Change takes time, so the rollout of PREP will be incremental and we don't expect perfection from day one!

Will the training advice podcasts etc. for PREP be available to Puppy Raisers via the Guide dogs web site? If so will it be easy to find?

PREP content will be hosted on our Learning Management System, Kallidus. As this is the same system that we use to deliver and manage training for our staff, we know that this works very well. Puppy Raisers will be emailed a direct link to the system and provided with login details, so you won't need to search the website for the content.

How does STEP and PREP improve the supply chain?

More consistent methods mean that for example, moving a dog from Forfar to Bristol, the dog will be handled in the same way. Historically, different approaches not only led to a poor and confusing experience for dogs, but had an efficiency impact.

In normal times (i.e. non-COVID-19), what is the reason for extending the time with Puppy Walkers so that they are now Puppy Raisers. Is it the result of



research showing puppies benefit from longer time in homes, or a cost saving measure?

The change of name to Puppy Raisers is not linked to extended times spent with puppies, but more about the new name better reflecting the breadth of the role. Puppies temporarily spending a greater length of time with Puppy Raisers is largely due to a shortage in dog training staff. We are investing in increasing numbers and capacity in these front line staff, but recruitment and training takes time.

Is there a CD with sounds which we can use when we can't get out socialising?

On [our puppy socialisation webpage](#) you can find links to audio sounds from the Dogs Trust, which has a great collection of sounds that every puppy should be familiar with, including traffic, domestic noises, children, and fireworks. Before playing or downloading these sound clips, please take time to familiarise yourself with the information on this page, including listening to our 'Socialising your puppy' podcast.

What form will the PREP training be? And when will it become available?

The first stage of content will be made available online in July, with further releases planned for September and December. Puppy Development Advisors (formerly Puppy Training Supervisors) will begin to deliver PREP content in puppy classes as they move through their own learning journeys.

Will Puppy Raisers be supplied with a new hardcopy of the handbook?

PREP is designed to make best use of technology and be accessible in the most efficient way for the majority of Puppy Raisers. Making content available electronically also allows us to keep it fresh and deliver updates and improvements much more cost-effectively than with printed material. As such we don't have plans to issue printed handbooks to all Puppy Raisers, but do understand that for some Puppy Raisers this will be the only option, so we will make printed content available on request.

How are Guide Dogs going to support those Puppy Raisers who cannot or wish not to use technology to access information & guidance?

Guidance materials can be given out in a paper form. This is however more expensive for the organisation, less efficient in getting to Puppy Raisers and has the possibility of becoming outdated quickly. Using technology we are able to provide more updated, relevant, efficient and cost effective resources that support our staff and volunteers.

A lot of Puppy Raisers aren't computer literate. How will they access the LMS?

There is enormous benefit to accessing the LMS and we encourage attempting to do so wherever possible. Once launched we will provide support for our volunteers

to access information this way. Content and guidance is also further supported by calls and visits from Puppy Development Advisors.

I would prefer a hard copy to enable me to keep referring to it; I am, however, willing to print it off myself because I do not want to waste your funds. Would this info come to me to enable me to do that?

Thank you, we will look at options for printing content at home for those who are happy to do so.

Before I started as a Puppy Walker I heard so many contradicting stories from people around me about what it all involved. I wish I had more access to puppy walking training methods. The PREP is an amazing program, also for new Puppy Raisers. How are you going to make potential Puppy Raisers familiar with the program?

The use of technology enables us to deliver and trigger PREP guidance to puppy raisers at the most relevant time. As we develop the learning management system (LMS) we will take into account the volunteer journey and if this can be further supported with PREP materials.

Do we have permission to do what i always did (i.e. carry my new pup into different atmospheres)? The explanation I was given was that "if you carry your pup he will learn not to be frightened because he is safe in your arms and you will be relaxed; therefore when he's old enough to be on the ground that particular circumstance should not phase him". Your instructions seem to be a "one size fits all", whereas a lot of us are older and therefore we take great care and always have done, to ensure we are healthy and safe; so be told we cannot do things that to us seem reasonable, is really frustrating.

One of the principles of PREP is 'Knowing your Puppy' which focuses on knowing your puppy as an individual - the opposite of 'one size fits all'. There may of course be some updated guidance, that contradicts with information given before or even after 2011, as PREP is based in the latest scientific theory and is about continually learning and improving.

Up here in the north-east we have had brilliant Puppy Training Supervisors, with fantastic input from them - both individually and in puppy classes etc and they have always ensured each milestone for a pup is checked and recorded. It sounds like some people have never had that kind of input?

One of the key benefits of PREP (and STEP) is standardisation and consistency. We aim to take best practice and exceptional performance from across the organisation and support every team in every region to meet those high standards.

Will pups that are 6 months old in July still go onto PREP training?

PREP guidance spans the time a puppy is with a Puppy Raiser and some written guidance will be more applicable at certain time frames than others. Puppies and (Puppy Raisers) placed from July 2021 will receive all guidance materials. Older puppies and Puppy Raisers will receive guidance that is most relevant to them. Our Puppy Development Advisors will use the same approaches, virtual and face-to-face classes and visits for all puppies in their scheme.



Will Puppy Boarders be expected to continue the new training methods? If so, how will they be trained?

We are aiming to provide PREP materials to Puppy Raisers to begin with however, we are currently looking at the training offered to Puppy Boarders and where this could be supplemented with PREP materials.

Are Puppy Classes going to deliver and advise on the new PREP information (when puppy classes start again!)?

Yes, as staff complete their own PREP learning they will start to incorporate this into Puppy Classes.

Technology is wonderful but occasionally face-to-face is good too. COVID restrictions aside, will puppy classes resume in this new PREP programme?

Yes, Puppy Classes aren't going away. We are however looking to provide more resources and information and overall make them more accessible to our puppy raisers.

Will Puppy Mentors be given info before rollout of PREP

We are currently working with our Puppy Development Advisors to ensure that they feel comfortable and able to deliver PREP materials. We will work with them to discuss how best and when to communicate information to our Mentors.

I am really pleased at how Guide Dogs are finally starting to come together to work as one organisation, instead of little teams! However, I am concerned that you are now placing even more responsibility for pups onto the Puppy Raisers. Are you aware, or have you catered for the fact that these new methods may mean you will lose a lot of volunteers - after all, we give 24/7/365 of our time, so filling in forms and having to be responsible for their health and welfare now too, seems a little bit excessive for someone who does not get paid!

We're extremely grateful to all our Puppy Raisers for volunteering in this role and for looking after our puppies. With the role of Puppy Raiser, there has always been a degree of responsibility that comes with looking after a puppy. This includes puppy development, health and wellbeing. As Puppy Raisers, you're best placed to collect important information accurately and the additional Puppy Behaviour Questionnaire when your pup is at five months is expected to only take 20-30 minutes to complete. Having said that, we do our best to take all stakeholders into account when managing change: dogs/pups, service users, volunteers, staff and donors.

If we do ask any stakeholders to do more, we carefully consider the impact of this and how we can make this as efficient and cost-effective as possible, through

better use of technology, improved training, increasing supporting resources where possible, or removing other tasks that are no longer required. For example, we have made it easier to get in touch with us for dog health information and advice from our Guide Line and introduced an online puppy prescription process to make our donors' money go further.

Dog health, wellbeing and safety

When does the use of the prescription form come into use?

The puppy prescription forms are already in use, they were rolled out regionally last year. If you are unsure of the process then I would recommend contacting your Puppy Development Advisor.

Can we download the puppy prescription form online from the Guide Dogs website?

Unfortunately, this functionality isn't available from our website but this may be something that we look at in the future. For now, the best way is to request this from your Puppy Development Advisor or from Guide Line (0800 78 11 444).

Can we email Guide Line?

Yes you can! Please email doghealth@guidedogs.org.uk.

I sent in a prescription for veloxa over 2 weeks ago, what is the turn round for medication please?

The turn around is 30 days for prescriptions.

Why do we need to go to our own vet with a prescription rather than go directly to you?

This is due to the legality of prescribing the products that we use. They have to be under direct veterinary care, the first 12 months are done under the veterinary care provided by the NBC centre vet. After 12 months your home vet becomes responsible for your pup and we need them to sign off that your puppy is healthy and appropriate for the use of the product.

Why can't we just get flea treatment from our vets and they can invoice Guide Dogs?

We would prefer our dogs to receive Nexguard Spectra and either Veloxa or Drontal, not all vets will stock these products. We are also able to get these products at a direct discount from the supplier.

We are sent Nexgard up to 30Kg only. My pup was over 30Kg at 10 months so this requires a separate visit just to have the pup weighed for the vet to sanction the prescription for the next size Nexgard. Unfortunately the vets are not keen to weigh pups during this lockdown

This still counts as a veterinary treatment and we would encourage you to make a nurse appointment to get your pup weighed if they dont want you to enter the



building. This is still a veterinary treatment and any issues that you may have you with your vet please raise to your Puppy Development Advisor.

I only received enough drugs for the first 10 months for my pup not 12 months. I will be to reorder after I have given her her March medication
You will need to reorder before your pups medication runs out.

Can I access the same information on Alexa from Google Home Hub or Siri?
Unfortunately, this feature doesn't work with Google Home Hub or Siri, but this is something we can look into for the future.

From the perspective of a Puppy Raiser it looks like the system for prescriptions for flea and worming is more work for Puppy Raisers rather than making a phone call to Guide Dogs. Seems we now have to fill in more paperwork and send to the vet (by email)?

This is due to the need for a dog to be under veterinary care. The first 12 months is covered by the National Breeding Centre (NBC) vet, however once the pup reaches 12 months your home vet is therefore the person responsible. To comply with veterinary regulations (the same for all dogs including pets) a prescription from your vet is required. This is then sent into the NBC who dispense the medication directly to your home.

What is the minimum amount of personal information required on a secondary tag? I was told that legally I need a postcode.

Guide Dogs recommend that Fosterers (previously known as Boarders) add an additional ID tag to the collar containing their surname and a contact telephone number. This tag does not have to conform to the legal requirements as the Guide Dogs Tag is the one that's important. Guide Dogs recommend that Fosterers add an additional ID tag to the collar containing their surname and a contact telephone number. This tag does not have to conform to the legal requirements as the Guide Dogs Tag is the one that's important.

I have Alexa on my phone already please explain again what I have to put in or say to Alexa to get info on guide dog issues please.

When you open the alexa app on your phone, you can browse for skills. search for Guide Dogs skill and 'enable' the skill. This will then mean you can start a question to your device with 'Alexa ask the Guide Dogs ...'

Can you upload traffic noises and other outdoor stimuli to the Alexa app?

This is something we can look into for future updates.

Are there any plans to have an app compatible with Google Home Hub?

Currently there isn't a google hub app, but this is something we can look into in the future. You can still access the content on the Alexa app on the website chatbot/messaging.

What if you don't have Alexa?

The answers from alexa are also the same as the ones on the chatbot/messaging on the website. You would get the same information.

As a mentor, I can vouch that there are Puppy Raisers who don't want to be finding support and guidance via technology, unfamiliarity and disinclination. Will there be paperwork available from the Puppy Development Advisors for these Puppy Raisers?

The health information can also be printed and sent to you please contact your Puppy Development Advisor who should be able to help with this.

How do you access the resources that you have mentioned?

You can contact either your Puppy Development Advisor or contact Guide Line (0800 78 11 444) who will be able to point you in the direction of the handouts, or use the alexa or search function on the website.

How do we answer strangers' questions with regards to a puppy ? As a Puppy Raiser, I have always been very open about Guide Dogs work & when asked, I have given pups name, age etc. I'm not sure how to now respond.

Where possible use some judgment, if you don't feel safe or feel that information could lead to someone being interested in taking your pup then avoid giving too much information. Please continue to promote the puppy raising programme but make sure that you try not to give specific details relating to your home or pup.

Born to Guide

Who will take the DNA swabs?

We ask our puppy raisers to take the saliva swabs. when dogs are 5 months and older.

After 90 years, should we now be able to identify the breed (or cross) which is most likely to succeed? Why do we continue to have such a wide range?

We have a range of breeds as we also have a lot of different guide dog owners that have different needs and our dogs suit different people. We have looked at different breeds over the years but now mainly breed Golden Retrievers, Labradors, German Shepherd and Poodle breeds and their crosses.

I love this innovation of DNA testing etc; but is the funding for this project coming purely from volunteer donations or do you have funding from other scientific researchers/government?

These are challenging times, and like many others, Guide Dogs has had to prioritise our spending to ensure we are focused on activities that deliver the greatest benefits. Increasing the support we are able to give to enable people



with sight loss to make the most of their potential and lead active fulfilling lives is at the heart of what we do, as is the welfare of our dogs. This project will support both areas. We need support to deliver this project successfully. Guide Dogs has allocated initial research funding to enable us to begin collecting samples, but we will not take provision from core service delivery and so we need support to ensure full delivery of this project. We are seeking external funding for the project and our philanthropy and partnerships team are actively looking for funders and corporate collaborations at the moment.

We have a [Born to Guide FAQs page](#) for this project on our website which may answer some other questions you may have.

Never heard of Born to Guide. Was it communicated in certain areas only or a National communication?

Communication should have been received by all puppy raisers at the end of 2020 as we communicated about swab sampling. We apologise if this information didn't get through to you. More national communications will be coming to all volunteers soon. Please feel free to visit our website for more [information on the Born to Guide project](#) or email borntoguide@guidedogs.org.uk if you would like to know more.

Saliva swabs should be capable of being taken very quickly so the 3 years quoted is a reflection on the processing side presumably?

We are sampling all dogs born from 2020 onwards. As we breed approximately 1,300 puppies a year (but this was reduced during 2020 due to covid), it will take us around 3 years to breed 3,000 puppies and collect the swabs. We will then have to process and sequence the swabs and collect all of the data on the dogs, so it will be longer than the three years before we can properly start to look at the data.

Document Ends.