

Forward



Good things come in small packages!

World's tiniest guide dog in the eye of a needle

Inside: find out who's
won a People Award

Guide Dogs goes international
with some fantastic Finns

Sighted guiding – everyday help
which makes all the difference



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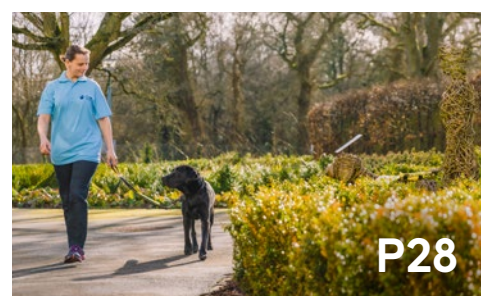
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Send your stories to Forward by email to **forward@guidedogs.org.uk** or addressed to 'Forward magazine' by post to the Head Office address below. Unfortunately, due to the volume of ideas we receive, we cannot acknowledge every item. We reserve the right to edit or refuse.

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A welcome from Tom



Just as almost everyone reading this is being personally affected by current news and events, Guide Dogs is not immune from everything going on. The cost-of-living crisis has come just as our services have never seen such high demand.

You may have seen it reported that dog food is one of the everyday items that's risen in price at the fastest rate, outside of utility bills. I'm sure I don't need to spell out the implications of that for us as a charity. On page 8, you can find out more about some cost-of-living advice put together for people with sight loss by the VI Charity Sector Partnership, of which we are members.

In other news, I was sad about the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II, whom I met on several occasions. She was inspirational. When she passed away, it was a privilege to hear from our volunteers, staff and service users with their memories of meeting Her Majesty, including how she always seemed to make a beeline for the guide dog in any room or crowd.

Over the summer we also lost our former Chairman, John Stewart. I never met John, but I know that he was very highly regarded by all who knew him, and I was glad that Guide Dogs was very well represented at his funeral. You can read his obituary on page 8.

Even though the Covid-19 pandemic is making fewer headlines these days than in the past, it's still hampering our work. It has been such a big disruptor to our breeding, puppy raising and training programmes that it's taking some time to get back to the pre-pandemic numbers of guide dog partnerships we used to create. We're working flat out to reduce waiting times as soon as possible, and taking every opportunity to boost the number of dogs we can match, such as the international work we're doing in the feature on page 27.

While we're of course being careful with our money, we're making sure that we're not

diluting the investment we've started making in our staff, volunteers, our facilities, and our infrastructure. Work has started to rebuild our Redbridge Regional Centre on the outskirts of London, and we've purchased a new centre in Newcastle, and are also well advanced for our new Training Centre in the Midlands.

Finally, Dolly, the guide dog mum that my wife Charlotte and I care for, has seen the litter of 10 puppies (nine girls and a boy) she had over the summer go off to puppy raisers across Britain. I'm delighted she's made another fantastic contribution to the guide dog service, and I wish her pups, and the volunteers who are looking after them, well. Thank you so much to the puppy raisers who provide regular updates to us, this is much appreciated.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Wright".

Tom Wright CBE
Chief Executive
Guide Dogs
@TomwrightUK on Twitter



Dolly's puppies take a nap

News

Christmas at the Guide Dogs Shop

The Guide Dogs Shop has fabulous gift ideas for family, friends and dogs this Christmas. From cards and calendars to homeware, decorations and tasty treats, we've got everything covered – and there's also a wide range of seasonal wrapping paper and gift bags to choose from to add the finishing touch to presents. Shopping on our website is quick, safe and easy, perfect for browsing with a biscuit (or two) and a cuppa. Best of all, 100% of the profit goes to Guide Dogs, to help people with sight loss live the life they choose. All our most popular favourites, alongside lots of carefully selected and exciting new gifts, are available now at guidedogsshop.com or by calling 0345 143 0197.



A magical Christmas celebration at St Paul's Cathedral

We're delighted to be hosting a Christmas concert like no other, supported by Citi and set in one of the world's most iconic cathedrals: St Paul's. Guests can soak up the atmosphere as they listen to the world-famous St Paul's choir, sing their favourite carols, and enjoy inspiring stories and festive readings and performances from celebrity guests including

Ruth Jones, David Walliams and more!

Tickets for the event, which is on 8 December 2022, were already selling fast as Forward went to press. For the latest availability, visit guidedogs.org.uk/StPauls, where you'll also find details of other ways to be part of the concert including an online auction.

Children go wild for family fun day



The Welsh Mountain Zoo in Colwyn Bay hosted Guide Dogs' first-ever North Wales family event, giving children with vision impairments the chance to meet a meerkat and feed a sea lion. All 14 families were able to encounter small animals including a gecko and a large African land snail called Gary. Those brave enough to put their hands inside sensory 'touch and feel' boxes encountered a snakeskin, a fox fur and a lion's foot while buddy dog Jess, a black Labrador, enjoyed cuddles from the children. One family said: "This was our first day out with a charity with our son and we thoroughly enjoyed the experience. We felt valued and can't wait for future events, especially as our son grows."

Love sparks at Guide Dogs' AGM

When guide dog owners and volunteers Kate Fenwick and Dave Evans attended Guide Dogs' Annual General Meeting in 2019, they weren't looking for love. They had known each other in their former lives as Trustees of another charity in the early 2000s, but a conversation sparked between the two at our AGM and the rest, as they say, is history.

The couple got married in September in Cheltenham and then, a few days later, attended Guide Dogs' 2022 AGM. Presenting the couple with engraved matching guide dog leads at the meeting, Chief Executive Tom Wright said: "On behalf of everyone at Guide Dogs, I want to wish you very many congratulations and we hope that you – and your two guide dogs Bella and Chip – had a wonderful day."



Ian gets a kick out of fundraising for Guide Dogs

Ian West, from Nottinghamshire, is currently walking to every Premier League football club across England to raise money. He set off on 1 August to visit the league's 20 clubs, and will finish on New Year's Eve at newly promoted Nottingham Forest's match against Chelsea. Ian, who was in the Royal Navy,



is wearing a jacket featuring 20 knitted guide dogs, each one wearing a team's colours. It's not the first epic fundraising feat the 67-year-old has undertaken for Guide Dogs as he's inspired by his brother, who has macular degeneration. Ian's solo walk around the UK coast in 2018 raised more than £7,000, which he used to name a guide dog puppy Banjo. Ian said: "I want to do whatever I can to help Guide Dogs support people living with sight loss to live the life that they choose."

The cost-of-living crisis: collective support to blind and partially sighted people

The cost-of-living crisis could have a disproportionate impact on the lives of people living with sight loss and so the eight organisations that make up the VI Charity Sector Partnership, of which Guide Dogs is a member, are coordinating a joint response to events. We have drawn up some shared information and guidance which pulls together and combines our collective knowledge and resources. The partnership aims to be able to offer help and support in areas such as advice and information, liaising with energy providers, ensuring access to food and essentials, money and benefits advice, access to technology, community support and emotional support. The partnership is also liaising with the Disability Benefits Consortium, which is a broader coalition of disability charities from within and beyond the sight loss sector. Visit guidedogs.org.uk/CostOfLiving for more information.

Taunton volunteer fundraising group celebrates a milestone

Our Taunton volunteer fundraising group has reached the incredible milestone of raising £1million for Guide Dogs. The group was established in 1958, and tipped their fundraising total into seven figures at a street collection in Bridgwater in early June. The group's fundraising in their first year amounted to £3 and 12 shillings.

Treasurer Dave Arney, who joined in 1973 alongside his guide dog-owning wife Sylvia, says his highlight was the group's 50th anniversary party in 2008. He said: "We celebrated with an event in Taunton's High Street, it was a phenomenal day. It was the day Guide Dogs took over Taunton with what seemed like the best part of 100 dogs ranging from puppies and working guide dogs to retired dogs."



Remembering two Guide Dogs volunteers at our AGM

Former Chairman and Trustee of Guide Dogs, John Stewart, passed away over the summer. John was Chairman of our Board of Trustees from November 2012 until he retired due to ill health three years later. He had a long and successful career in the finance industry, becoming Chairman of the Legal & General Group Plc and a Member of the Court of Directors of the Bank of England, responsible for the UK's monetary policy. John loved visiting our Maidstone Community Team and was always an ardent supporter of their fundraising events along with his son-in-law, Jules.

In May, we also said goodbye to an outstanding Guide Dogs volunteer and supporter, Gerald Wildish. Gerald had volunteered as secretary

of the Fylde coast fundraising group in the North West for 33 years and during this time, he supported 28 dogs as a puppy raiser. He also raised tens of thousands of pounds for the charity.

Guide Dogs Chairman Jamie Hambro paid tribute to John and Gerald at our AGM in September, and said: "Our thoughts are with their families and loved ones and we are eternally grateful for their dedication, support, and friendship to many across the organisation. They will be sorely missed."

Pictured: John Stewart (left) and Gerald Wildish

Small is beautiful for the Guide Dogs Appeal 2022

Staff, volunteers and fundraisers came together to 'bake' a difference for this year's Guide Dogs Appeal in October, with everyone encouraged to make and share dog-themed cakes and makes. We also joined forces with world-renowned micro sculptor Willard Wigan MBE who created Daniel – the

world's smallest guide dog sculpture, set into the eye of a needle. Willard created Daniel under a microscope and painted him using one of his own eyelashes. The tiny sculpture was available to buy for one lucky collector, with 100% of the proceeds going to the appeal. In honour of Willard's work, we named

a real-life guide dog puppy Daniel, and Great British Bake-Off 2019 winner David Atherton encouraged people to try the trend of creating tiny cakes and bakes, known as micro-baking. David even created a recipe for a micro-Victoria sponge sandwich for us. Find out more at guidedogs.org.uk/appeal.



Guide Dogs in the media



The Times, the Evening Standard and Dogs Today magazine all featured gorgeous back to school-themed photographs of our guide dogs in training in early September. As schoolchildren returned to classrooms, London Community Team dogs Ron, Atlas, Eve and Fordi were pictured ready for their 'first day of school', complete with Guide Dogs tote bags full of toys and treats. The photos included captions which explained how they will be completing 25 weeks of training to become fully-qualified guide dogs.



Hello! magazine featured an exclusive interview with James Middleton, brother of HRH The Princess of Wales, about his tribute to the late Queen Elizabeth II. James donated a puppy called Bertie – the name by which The Queen's father, George VI, was known among family and friends – to Guide Dogs, after his pet golden retriever Mabel gave birth over the summer. The piece included photos of James taken at our National Centre, and the story was then covered by Harper's Bazaar magazine's website, the Daily Express online, Daily Mail online, Daily Mirror online, Yahoo! News and Marie Claire magazine's website.

The Daily Mirror ran the results of our 'Dogs in Weddings' research, revealing that 94% of dog owners who were planning a wedding in the next year would be including their pet in the celebrations. The paper included the headline 'In Holy Mutt-rimony' and a picture of bride Lizzie Fairclough and her guide dog, Ziggy. Our survey, which found that canines were trusted with roles including 'Dog of Honour' and Best Dog instead of Best Man. The story was also picked up online by the Evening Standard, Yahoo News and the Daily Star Sunday.



Star news



Susie Dent visits our National Centre

Susie Dent, lexicographer on Channel 4 gameshow Countdown, visited our National Centre to meet some of the puppies who are set to change people's lives. She said: "It was a wonderful experience visiting the centre and finding out more about the journey of a guide dog, from the breeding programme and specialised training to the really important process of matching them with someone with sight loss. It was so special meeting the gorgeous puppies, knowing that they will go on to become life-changing guides."

Susie is an avid supporter of the charity and championed our Power of Description campaign, which encouraged people to volunteer as a My Sighted Guide. She also hosted Guide Dogs' People Awards last year, which celebrates the contributions of staff and service users.

Inspirational Masterclasses

As part of our Make Every Day Count campaign, we launched three Masterclasses this summer to demonstrate how Guide Dogs supports children with sight loss and their families from the day they are born, helping them achieve their dreams and live a life without barriers.

In the first Masterclass, ITV This Morning's vet Dr Scott Miller welcomed a group of children who use our services to his practice in Richmond, London, to show them what it takes to be a vet. Dr Scott talked through how to carry out a head-to-tail examination to check for any problems through touch with the help of his dog Scully, tortoisés Steve and Alan, and two friendly ferrets.

The second Masterclass involved blind influencer and YouTube sensation Lucy Edwards showcasing her top tips for creating

content when you're blind or have a vision impairment with a group of aspiring young YouTubers.

Finally, England blind football player Rainbow Mbuangi hosted a Masterclass to inspire the next generation of blind footballers alongside the coaching team at Merseyside Blind Football Club. The team took the children through the techniques of blind football, using communication while playing and how to shoot that all-important goal.



On the campaign trail



Guide Dogs at the party conferences

The Campaigns team attended the Labour, Conservative and SNP party conferences this autumn. Political party conferences are a really good way for us to engage with politicians about our key campaigns and ask them to take specific action to make change for people with sight loss. This year we talked about Open Doors, which is our campaign to end access refusals for guide and assistance dog owners, Scoot Aware, highlighting the dangers that e-scooters pose to people with vision impairment and All Things Equal, a campaign to ensure that children with vision impairment receive the support and services they need at school. It's the first time we've taken three campaigns to a conference to give visitors the chance to talk about their area of interest.

We played a quiz-style game with politicians to tell them about the campaigns. This enables us to talk about serious campaigns in an engaging and memorable way. In just a few days, we managed to speak to many politicians who are key to our work including the Prime Minister, Secretaries of State for Transport and Health, the Equalities Minister, Shadow Ministers for Transport and Children, members of the Transport Select Committee as well as many MPs, MSPs and Councillors who want to support our campaigns right across the UK.

A number of volunteers joined us on the stands to talk about their lives as guide dog owners and experiences of the campaign issues. We were thrilled that two young volunteers, Caitlin and Neve, took part in discussion panels at fringe events alongside deaf young people and politicians. They shared their experiences of attending school as pupils with vision impairments.

In all, we spoke to over 100 MPs and MSPs at the conferences. We've made some really valuable connections which we will take forward to further our campaign asks.

Guide Dogs' app and the Open Doors campaign

In July, we launched a Guide Dogs app to enable guide dog owners to report access refusals directly and access advice and support when they experienced a refusal. We're delighted that at the time of writing the app had nearly 1,400 downloads. To find out more about our Open Doors campaign, visit TinyURL.com/OpenDoorsCampaign.



Returning in style after Covid

We hear from volunteers Ian Carnachan and Brenda Liston on their return to volunteering in their communities after the pandemic.



For anyone unfamiliar with your volunteer role, please can you explain what you do?

Ian: My role as Fundraising Group Coordinator for my local branch sees me keeping in touch with all members of our group, organising our monthly meetings and visits to local shopping centres to trade, and providing information on Guide Dogs to the local community. I'm always on the lookout for new ways to fundraise.

Brenda: I'm a My Sighted Guide volunteer with a chap who has had very limited vision since birth. I collect him from his home and take him out for a trip. He's very interested in being outdoors.

How did lockdowns and social distancing impact your volunteering?

Ian: It had a major impact because we couldn't meet in person, so we more or less hibernated for two years. I felt very sad that I couldn't carry out my role and missed interacting with other volunteers and supporters.

Brenda: When we couldn't go out, I phoned my My Sighted Guide partner every two weeks instead. I was also supporting another person with 'keeping in touch' calls. I'm still in contact with him and we're great friends.

Now the most disruptive years of the pandemic are behind us, what's it like to be volunteering in-person/ in communities again?

Ian: It's great. Our group is nearly as busy as we were before lockdown and it's wonderful to be out and meeting everyone again. And of course it's great to see money coming in to Guide Dogs again.

Brenda: It's great to get out and about with my My Sighted Guide partner. We're in a weekly routine, we're both getting fitter and our wellbeing is improving.

What can someone expect from volunteering in your role?

Ian: Having the satisfaction of leading a great team of volunteers and the chance to get behind a cause that is very dear to everyone who is part of the Guide Dogs family.

Brenda: It doesn't take up much time, it's once a week with my My Sighted Guide partner, and once every two weeks with the chap I speak to on the phone. It's definitely had a positive impact on me as a person.

A full version of this interview is available at guidedogs.org.uk/blog/returning-in-style-after-covid.

People Awards 2022

Our annual People Awards celebrate our incredible volunteers, service users and staff, shining a light on their huge contribution and outstanding achievements.

This year, the winners were announced at a glittering awards ceremony at our Reading Hub, hosted by Hollywood Daredevil actor Charlie Cox.

We also launched the new Hambro Award – paving the way for innovation with a grant for a brilliant idea from within the Guide Dogs family, named after and funded by our Chairman, Jamie. The prestigious Princess Alexandra Award for Lifetime Achievement was the final award to be presented. Congratulations to all our winners and nominees!



Overall service user winner – Rex Davies

Sight loss is a large part of six-year-old Rex's life. Both he and his mum, who's a guide dog owner, have a vision impairment, with Rex receiving assistive technology support through our Tech for All scheme.

As a result, Rex is now determined to raise money for Guide Dogs and help others with sight loss, saying he wants to give back to the charity that has changed his family's lives. He's already raised more than £1,000 by completing a 3km muddy obstacle course.

Overall volunteer winner – Christine Lacey

Chris is a much-cherished fosterer who has cared for many dogs over the years, providing a loving home for the final stages of their lives. The role can mean unexpected vet visits, close monitoring of symptoms and frequent out-of-hours calls, working with our dog care team to gauge when the time is right to say goodbye. She is calm and measured and is not daunted by the inevitable outcome despite the emotional cost.

Chris's willingness to repeat this emotionally draining process over and over is staggering, and a testament to her resilience and selflessness.

Overall staff winners – The Academy Team

This team was set up in 2020 to deliver Guide Dogs' Academy, an ambitious and creative project to change how we recruit and train Guide Dog Mobility Specialists and Guide Dog Trainers, aiming to take on and develop 200 new staff over the next five years.

The team has since made huge strides towards these goals and garnered international admiration from other guide dog schools – having launched Academy, run several successful recruitment campaigns and developed an innovative new training programme.

Hambro Award – Lynda Palmer



Habilitation Specialist Lynda supports children with sight loss in the South West. Last summer, she was hugely helpful and enthusiastic in setting up three national Masterclasses giving children a taste of their dream job – either footballer, YouTuber or vet.

Lynda will use the grant to organise a local event, giving more children the chance to enjoy a unique aspirational experience that wouldn't normally be possible.

Princess Alexandra Award for Lifetime Achievement Volunteer winner – Eva Rich



Eva has spent 60 years continuously promoting Guide Dogs. She heads up the Pembrokeshire fundraising group, which she started in 1975 and has raised around £700,000.

Eva, who's now partnered with seventh guide dog Nancy, is a fantastic ambassador, excellent speaker and tireless fundraiser, well known for her personal support to other volunteers and guide dog owners. Her love of life is evident, she loudly and infectiously promotes the value of independence and is much loved and admired.

Princess Alexandra Award for Lifetime Achievement Staff winner – David Grice



Dave represents everything that's great about Guide Dogs. Starting his 35-year career as Kennel Assistant, Dave is now Head of Dog Training and Behaviour, and has revolutionised how we train our dogs. Deeply committed to ethical and science-based training, he was the driving force behind our Standardised Training for Excellent Partnerships (STEP) programme and the roll out of positive reinforcement training across Guide Dogs.

A highly respected colleague, Dave manages his team with care, commitment and empathy, also volunteering his time as an International Guide Dogs Federation assessor.

Service user awards winners

Outstanding Person of the Year –
Lisa Halley

Guide dog Partnership of the Year –
Terry Quinn and guide dog Spencer

My Sighted Guide Partnership of the Year –
Jodie Devlin and Carys Rasanen Young

Inspirational Young Person of the Year –
Rex Davies

Volunteer awards winners

Person-Centred – Anne Green, My Sighted Guide, Birmingham Community Team

Expert – Colin and Hilary Froude, Fosterers, Southampton Community Team

Optimistic – Janice McCauley, fosterer, puppy raiser, speaker, fundraiser, Maidstone Community Team

Partner – Christine Lacey, fosterer, Cardiff Community Team

Lead by Example – Robert Meikle, fundraiser, recruiter, speaker, campaigner, Glasgow Community Team

Engage – Larry and Jacqueline Meaney, fosterers, fundraisers, speakers, puppy raisers and drivers, Southampton Community Team

Staff awards winners

Person-Centred – Katrina Ayling, Dog Health and Wellbeing Specialist, and Denise Laughlin, Dog Health and Wellbeing Operations Manager, South West

Expert – Jan Johnston, Operations Volunteering Officer, North West

Optimistic – Individual Giving Department

Partner – Alicia Evans, Committed Giving Acquisition Officer

Lead by Example – The Academy Team

Engage – Joanne Nash, Training and Behaviour Advisor, South West

Sighted guiding – everyday help which makes all the difference

**At Guide Dogs, we're
working towards a more
inclusive society for
people with sight loss.**

Our dogs open up the world for their owners but there's another, direct way that you can change the environment for people with sight loss, and that's by making sure that you have the sighted guiding skills needed to assist someone yourself.

Our free sighted guide training provides you with the knowledge and confidence to help someone with sight loss navigate their surroundings using well-established ways of guiding that are safe, practical and dignified. Our sighted guide training teaches anyone how to guide someone who's blind or partially sighted with confidence, skill and empathy. The number of people living with sight loss in the UK is already two million, a number projected to double by 2050, so it's increasingly important that we all know how to help.



A person may need help if they're in unfamiliar surroundings, at night or if the road layout has changed – whether they're with a guide dog or not. From our research we know that people with sight loss feel more hesitant now about asking for help than they did before the pandemic, but more than half of those asked said they did often need assistance while they were out. We also know people are often keen to help but unsure how to engage – or in some well-meaning cases they assume they know what the person with sight loss wants, even though they're probably wrong!

The good news is that sighted guiding skills are straightforward (and free) to pick up. Much like learning first aid, sighted guiding is a life skill giving you the confidence to offer help in the most useful way. At Guide Dogs we are working with individuals, family and friendship groups to deliver training on these practical and immensely rewarding skills.

We deliver three training programmes:

Top 10 Tips for Sighted Guiding – A short, on-demand video for people who want to learn the basics quickly, so they can step up and help when a person with sight loss needs them. It provides advice on how to start a conversation with someone you think may need help as well as how to guide in a range of everyday situations. The short, memorable video is available to watch any time at guidedogs.org.uk/how-you-can-help/sighted-guide-training/.

Introduction to Sighted Guide Training –

This is a live, one-hour online training session with an expert, for anyone wanting to learn how to guide someone with sight loss. This covers how to ask if someone needs assistance, basic guiding techniques, common eye conditions, and an awareness of access rights and barriers. By the end of the course, you'll be able to help confidently and safely whenever needed. Visit guidedogs.org.uk/SightedGuidingIntro.

Friends and Family Sighted Guiding Training –

This training is ideal for anyone wanting to feel confident guiding a loved one with a vision impairment. In this two-hour practical group session, those taking part will learn or refresh the skills to guide safely, covering topics including practical guiding, walking through narrow spaces and how to detect changes on the ground and at head level. It also explores some of the emotional consequences of sight loss, provides an introduction to issues around access rights, and allows participants to meet others with similar experiences. For more, call our Guide Line on 0800 781 1444 or visit guidedogs.org.uk/how-you-can-help/sighted-guide-training/#friends.

It feels good to know you have the skills to help someone if they need you – and we know from people who have attended our training that they are really proud to be able to put that into action. A few minutes' assistance can transform someone's day, turning a moment of uncertainty into a really positive experience, and building confidence – on both sides!

Everyone can be a guiding star this Christmas

With Christmas round the corner, sighted guiding skills are more vital than ever. Crowds of people wielding shopping bags, darker streets and the festive bustle mean that even familiar environments can be a challenge, so it's important to know how to help someone with sight loss. For anyone who would like to know how to help, we have a short top 10 guiding tips video at

guidedogs.org.uk/how-you-can-help/sighted-guide-training/.

The video is free, and those who watch will be helping to make the world a more inclusive place. Together we can make shops, theatres, churches and public spaces more accessible, so we can all experience the magic of Christmas.

A photograph of two men walking on a cobblestone street in a town. The man on the left, Lewis, is wearing a maroon zip-up jacket and dark trousers, and is using a white cane. The man on the right, Andrew, is wearing a brown corduroy jacket over a blue and white striped shirt, a green patterned scarf, a flat cap, and glasses. He has his arm around Lewis's shoulder. They are both carrying backpacks. The background shows a street with buildings, signs, and other people in the distance.

Lewis and Andrew's story

When Andrew moved to Beverley in East Yorkshire, he wanted to take up volunteering again, having previously volunteered as a Puppy Raiser and Breeding Dog Holder for Guide Dogs.



While his previous volunteer experience involved being a vital part of the early socialisation and education of guide dog puppies, he was now keen to have a direct impact on those with sight loss, and signed up to Guide Dogs' My Sighted Guide service as a volunteer in 2019.

The My Sighted Guide service helps people who are blind or partially sighted to get out and about. The idea is to build confidence by matching someone with a sighted person who can support them to explore their local area, try new activities and provide help getting around.

Soon after he applied and had completed his training, Andrew was partnered with 26-year-old Lewis. Lewis has Leber hereditary optic neuropathy (LHON) – a genetic condition. As a teenager he would walk into things, which he assumed was because of his long hair, but in fact was because the sight in his left eye had gone. Eventually Lewis lost most of his sight when he was 18, and he now has limited light perception and some colour perception.

From walks around Beverley town centre, to trips to Hull for shopping and eating out, Andrew and Lewis do all sorts of things together. While the pandemic meant they had to switch to phone calls during lockdown rather than going out and about, they were able to get back to face-to-face visits as restrictions lifted.

Andrew said: "We go to the cinema, we've had a go at running, we've been on a couple of history walks round Hull with an amateur historian

friend of mine and have even taken part in a game of boules. And we do quite a lot of talking!

"While I've always enjoyed supporting the dog-side of Guide Dogs, it's been great to get involved with a more person-centred role. Being a My Sighted Guide volunteer has really brought an extra dimension to my life – meeting and helping someone beyond my normal circle of activity.

"Lewis is a very interesting and positive individual with whom I share many interests, so our meetings are always stimulating and full of conversation. It's something that I really look forward to and I'm sure I get as much out of it as he does!

"I think both Lewis and I see it as a bit of a release from our normal routines. One advantage of it is that, beyond the meetings, it doesn't take up too much extra time – you just spend a few hours every couple of weeks with that person.

"Most importantly it helps me think about the day-to-day challenges of people with vision impairments and ways in which I can best help."

“

Being a My Sighted Guide volunteer has really brought an extra dimension to my life.

”





Lewis says: "I mainly wanted a volunteer to help me to get to places which, with my sight situation, I had no way of getting to. Even with long cane and mobility training, which I'm confident with, there are just places you can't access or if you can, it's stressful and no fun. At the time, my partner wasn't independently mobile, so we couldn't get out for walks and I was new to Beverley and hadn't been able to explore past the essential places. I could use technology to know what shops etc were around, but then not know how to get to them!"

"Having a My Sighted Guide volunteer to help me discover what is available and how to get there, has been really useful for me and my partner too."

"My mum recommended the service when I first lost my sight – I didn't go for it then because I was worried that I'd be matched with someone

I didn't click with or have things to talk about with. I kick myself now for not doing it sooner!"

"It really doesn't feel like an arrangement now – although it's very organised and has boundaries. Because you get to meet the person and have a chat before you're committed to anything, and because of all of the guidelines, you're comfortable straight away."

"It's company with someone you wouldn't have met otherwise. I think what helps is that Andrew is a very active person and has other life experiences – things I've never heard of or places he's been. We chat a lot about engineering and how things work which is really interesting to me. It's a versatile service and I value that."

"We've explored Beverley, we go to the cinema, I can nip into places when I'm with Andrew which I couldn't on my own."

It's all very laid back now and nice that it feels like just two people hanging out. Silly things make an impact, like I can buy random things when Andrew is there to help with descriptions, which I wouldn't have bought otherwise."

"It's very basic but when you can't do much, it means the world. Just having the ability to go for long two-hour walks to places I couldn't normally access is great."

Andrew adds: "If you like meeting people and have a good ear to other's conversations and experiences, being a Sighted Guide will widen your perspective and outlook on life."

"It will undoubtedly open your mind to the challenges that a visually impaired person has to deal with on a day-to-day basis and how, in a small way, you can help. I've found it entirely enjoyable."

Dedicate a star this Christmas in memory of a loved one

As Christmas approaches, we would like to send Forward readers our best wishes and hope that you can enjoy the festivities with those who are special in your life. Christmas can also be a time when our thoughts turn to those who are no longer with us. It can be especially poignant to share those memories and honour what was important to our loved ones at this time of year.

That's why every Christmas, at Guide Dogs, we run a very special campaign where a star can be dedicated to commemorating someone special. Those who dedicate a star can take comfort in knowing their loved one's memory has contributed to our work, helping people with sight loss to live the lives they choose.

This year, our pack includes two stars – one to keep and one to either post back to Guide Dogs to be displayed at one of our offices, or an image of the star with its message can be posted to our online dedication page at guidedogs.org.uk/guidingstars.

This can be a wonderful way to remember a beloved person, pet or guide dog at this special time of year. Last year, we received many beautiful stars and thanks to the kind donations included with them, we can continue to transform the lives of people living with sight loss.

To find out more, call 0800 953 0113 or visit guidedogs.org.uk/guidingstars.





Cooperation is the name of the game with Scotmid

We are delighted to announce that Scotmid Co-operative have chosen Guide Dogs as their new charity of the year.

Scotmid is Scotland's largest independent co-operative, and has been at the heart of Scottish communities since 1859. The co-operative has almost 300 outlets including Scotmid Co-op, Lakes & Dales Co-operative, Semichem and funeral offices, all across Scotland, the North of England and Northern Ireland.

The partnership is predicted to raise more than £250,000 for Guide Dogs, and will fund five vital new staff members. These include three new Habilitation Specialists, who work with children and young people with a vision impairment and their families, and two Guide Dog Mobility Specialists, who partner life-changing guide dogs to people with sight loss. The co-op's donation will enable us to help and support hundreds more people with sight loss in the area where Scotmid operates for years to come.

As well as life-sized dog and countertop collection boxes in stores, Scotmid staff will be taking on fundraising challenges in aid of Guide

Dogs, from Christmas jumper days to raffles in store to sponsored walks and tea parties.

Kyla McVicar, Guide Dogs' Business Development Manager, said: "Thanks so much to everyone at Scotmid for their incredible support, as well as our volunteers who have been helping us get the relationship off to a fantastic start."

Scotmid CEO John Brodie said: "Our core purpose is to serve our communities and to improve people's everyday lives, so Guide Dogs is an excellent fit for us. Over the coming year, we are looking forward to raising much-needed funds and awareness of this very worthy cause. We want to play our part in supporting those who are affected by sight loss, helping them to live more independent and fuller lives."

Find out more

To find out more about workplace fundraising for Guide Dogs, visit guidedogs.org.uk/how-you-can-help/how-your-company-can-get-involved.

A day in the life of...

Katharine Stinton, Vision Rehabilitation Specialist



Katharine said: “‘Just tell us about a typical day’ they said. Sounds straightforward, but as a Vision Rehabilitation Specialist (VRS) at Guide Dogs, no two days are the same, and that’s one of the reasons I love the job.

“As a VRS, we are involved from the early stages of a person’s Guide Dogs journey. Following our Guide Line colleagues’ initial call with a client, we build up a picture of their situation, what’s working and what isn’t. Then we talk about what they’d like to achieve or change, and make a plan to get there. That might be referrals to other charities or services, another Guide Dogs service such as My Sighted Guide – or perhaps it’s an application for a guide dog. We also work with people who have been accepted onto the ready to train list, progressing mobility, independent living and technology skills, so that people are, and remain truly ‘ready to train’.

“I am home-based so after the morning school run I set off to my first client; I might be working with someone to effectively navigate to their local shop, we might be using navigation apps to help them get around, or we could be improving long cane skills. In the shop we

might look at some of the technology options for identifying products or the client might prefer to find the help desk – we work around whatever works best for them.

“In the afternoon I could be with a different client, carrying out a second conversation, one of the parts of the role I really enjoy – listening lots and working together to form action plans for moving forward. I always feel so privileged when clients open up and talk about their own journey, I am constantly learning!

“Before picking up my kids from after school club I try to squeeze in a trail run in the forest; for me it’s the best way to keep my own mental health in good shape and to be the best person I can be, both for my children and my clients.

“It’s such a rewarding role because each individual input builds that person’s options of how they choose to spend their day. By investing time in these skills, we empower clients to improve their own lives right now – a huge benefit whether a guide dog is part of that journey or not.”

We’ve made a YouTube video all about Katharine and her role – to watch, visit [TinyURL.com/KatharineStinton](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KatharineStinton).

“

I always feel so privileged when clients open up and talk about their own journey, I am constantly learning!

”

Supporters

Dear supporters,

As the year comes to a close, it's been heart-warming to read about your incredible fundraising endeavours. We are humbled and inspired by the wonderful range of activities you take part in across the UK to support our cause. Well done to all of you who have walked or run, been a dedicated member of a fundraising volunteer group, or if you're a young fundraiser like Cara, Mason or Freya.

However you have fundraised, thank you so much for playing your part in helping our work to ensure that people living with sight loss can live the life they choose.

I hope you have a lovely Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Deborah

Deborah Bourne

Director of Fundraising



Jim and supporters

▲ Fundraising athlete Jim Bradley, from Garvagh in County Londonderry, Northern Ireland, has raised £6,300 by running six marathons over five weeks. Jim, who's raised thousands for various causes by running a series of marathons since 2018, was inspired to run for Guide Dogs by childhood friend Iain Matthew and Iain's guide dog, Mac.



Cara

▲ Cara Miller-Mulholland from Wombourne, Staffordshire, has raised £970 towards naming a guide dog puppy after her favourite My Little Pony, which is called Sweetie Belle. Cara, aged six, ran a half-marathon over five days, held an own-clothes day at school, sold cakes at a local carnival and made her own bracelets to sell. And as Forward went to press, guide dog owner mum Claire and her guide dog George were helping Cara organise a charity ball.

Antony Rowland raised £985 by running the Great North Run in September. Antony, a vet, has visited our Atherton Regional Centre near Manchester once a week for more than 10 years, checking our dogs over for any problems. Antony said: "Working for Guide Dogs makes you realise what an amazing charity it is. I felt it was time to give something back!"



▼ There ain't no mountain high enough for Stacey McCallum from Lanarkshire, who reached the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro and raised almost £7,500. Stacey made the remarkable climb in memory of her parents after being inspired to fundraise by her friend Scott Cunningham and his guide dog, Lincoln. Stacey said: "It was the best experience of my life. Summit night was so hard but knowing the difference it would make to Guide Dogs kept me pushing on."



Stacey at the summit



Brian and friends

▲ Brian Doherty, from Ballymena in Northern Ireland, is on his way to naming another guide dog puppy. Each year Brian, who has retinitis pigmentosa and less than 10% functional vision, completes a 55-mile walk taking on some of the toughest terrain around Antrim. This year he raised £5,361, taking his total over the past six years to more than £25,000. Brian presented this year's total to the Antrim and Ballymena fundraising group.



A pair of guide dogs with a difference appeared in two iconic locations in Cardiff city centre, courtesy of Lord Mayor Graham Hinchey. The life-sized dog collection boxes were placed in the grounds of Cardiff Castle and at the Central Library by Graham and his wife Anne, who have fostered more than 20 real-life training dogs over a decade. Graham has chosen Guide Dogs Cymru as the Lord Mayor's Charity of the Year, with £4,000 raised so far.

A huge well done to everyone who participated in the Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh Kiltwalks for Guide Dogs this summer. Kiltwalks are mass participation walking events raising money for Scottish charities, with participants donning their finest tartan. Everything walkers raise is generously topped up by 50% by Scottish philanthropist Sir Tom Hunter and The Hunter Foundation. The total raised for Guide Dogs by all three of this year's Kiltwalks is more than £30,000.



Supporters

► Okehampton fundraising group has raised £13,000, £500 of which was donated by housebuilder Redrow Ltd. Since the arrival of their new group co-ordinator and volunteers earlier this year, the Devon-based group has gone from strength to strength, regularly hosting events where people can learn about Guide Dogs and meet guide dog partnerships.



Mason

► Extensive work on her home in West Yorkshire meant that Sue Beesting, a member of the Airedale and Wharfedale fundraising group, spent the summer at her caravan at Skipsea on Yorkshire's east coast. But it didn't stop her from fundraising! With help from sister-in-law, June Beesting, Sue attended car boot sales and sold her home-made pickles and preserves around the caravan park, raising £3,500. Meanwhile the group also had a busy summer, taking part in carnivals, organising street and store collections, giving talks and running a market stall, raising more than £9,000.



When 10-year-old Freya wanted to raise money for Guide Dogs to say thank you for her buddy dog, Gwen, she and five-year-old sister Ella baked some dog-friendly biscuits to sell outside their home to their neighbours in Godalming, Surrey. The pair made £130, even selling biscuits to those who don't have dogs. Freya said: "Gwen is the best, and she is amazing, so I wanted to give something back."



Okehampton fundraising group

◀ Mason Davies, aged 11 and from Llandrindod Wells in Mid Wales, embarked on a challenging 13-mile 'Trig Trail'. Mason, who has sight loss, was joined on the five-hour walk by 115 well-wishers and has raised more than £15,000. His efforts won celebrity backing from Welsh singer and BBC presenter Wynne Evans, famous for the Go Compare adverts, and chart-toppers The Wurzels, while local businesses, rotary clubs and rugby clubs also lent support.



Airedale & Wharfedale fundraisers

Guide Dogs goes international with some fantastic Finns

In August and September six dogs made the short hop from Helsinki, Finland, to Heathrow to join the Guide Dogs family.

Pai, Pico, Reina, Terri and Uke are fully trained guide dogs from the Finnish Federation of the Visually Impaired and have now settled with the Shrewsbury Community Team. The sixth, a beautiful black Labrador named Bertil, is staying near the National Centre near Leamington as he is earmarked as a potential breeding dog.

Laura Cross, CAS Operations Manager for the North West, said: "This is a wonderful example of international collaboration with our friends in Finland. While we're dealing with a significant waiting list, particularly in the Shrewsbury team, the demand for guide dogs in Finland at the moment is low. This exchange will allow these five dogs to start their roles in the prime of their lives."

Over the past few months, the five Finnish guide dogs have been assimilating well, picking up English and learning that cars are now on the wrong side of the road. By the time

you read this, they may already be partnered with new owners around the Shrewsbury area.

But our Finnish dogs are just the tip of the international iceberg. Small groups of guide dog owners have travelled overseas with our staff in the past few months to be partnered with guide dogs from other organisations. We've worked with Leader Dogs, based in Michigan, USA,

"This exchange will allow these five dogs to start their roles in the prime of their lives."

"



an organisation which trains guide dogs for people all over the world, as well as continuing our relationship with Irish Guide Dogs in Cork. These plans have made a small but significant difference in recovering from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In addition to Finnish Bertil, we have three new potential breeding dogs from CESECAH – Centre d'Etude de Sélection et d'Élevage de Chiens guides d'Aveugles et autres Handicapés. This guide dog school in central southern France has given us German shepherd puppy pair Tango and Tia, as well as golden retriever Shiva. These dogs will help us improve our genetic diversity but have been carefully picked to help safeguard the health and core traits of our future life-changing guide dogs.

Strengthening bonds with fellow International Guide Dog Federation members around the globe has paid dividends this year in so many ways.

Focusing on puppy raising and fostering

Volunteers and donors are the backbone of everything we do at Guide Dogs, and we're so grateful to each and every one of our supporters for helping people with sight loss live the life they choose.

However this year, we've put a special focus on our puppies and dogs in training, as this is key to getting back on our feet after the disruption the Covid-19 pandemic created by limiting the number of dogs we've been able to breed, raise and train.

We've highlighted the importance of these volunteer roles in the media in recent months – you may have seen puppy raisers on BBC Breakfast or on Channel 4's Steph's Packed Lunch, spotlighting the need to grow our puppy raising and fostering family, and we've seen more people come forward offering to help.

We've also taken a closer look at what it means to be a puppy raiser, to better understand the overall experience, including the day-to-day activities, and where we can improve, to help us attract and keep as many volunteers as possible in future.

In July, we invited more than 1,000 puppy raisers (past and present), our staff, and a further 1,000 potential volunteers, to contribute to research which we're now using to improve the puppy raising experience for current and future volunteers. Thank you to everyone who offered their feedback. Here, we highlight the most significant points from the research.

One puppy raiser told us:

“

I look at the friends I've made [through puppy raising] and the owners I'm in touch with and what a dog means to them. One told me they'd be at home all day long without their dog.

It doesn't matter how many times they poop on the carpet, if we didn't do it those people wouldn't have a dog that literally allows them to live a life.

”



Why people puppy raise for Guide Dogs

Two-thirds said that their main motivations were their part in helping people living with sight-loss, and helping train a dog to prepare it to be a guide dog. One-third said they puppy raised purely because of the love of dogs and caring for them.

Your experience of puppy raising: what's going well?

In general, our volunteers were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with:

- Guide Dogs' level of expertise in raising and training puppies (**92%**)
- The application process (**91%**)
- Support from their Puppy Development Advisor (**84%**)
- Quality of training materials provided (**80%**)

What can we work on?

One quarter of respondents told us that we have some work to do on how we communicate with puppy raisers, especially once their dog has gone into training, so we're looking at how we can do this better. We also want to celebrate our volunteers' contributions in a better way.

Puppy Raising for Excellent Partnerships (PREP)

- Nearly three-quarters (**73%**) of volunteers agreed that they were happy to apply the training approaches in PREP.
- More than half (**59%**) of volunteers agreed that PREP content is easy to understand and implement.

The introduction of PREP training in 2021 has been a difficult transition for some, especially more experienced puppy raisers, with the e-learning method being a struggle for some. Many felt it

was a little onerous. We also heard that you're keen to get face-to-face time with our staff and each other.

What next?

We're really pleased that, on the whole, our volunteers are having positive experiences and enjoying their unique roles as puppy raisers. We're excited to start working on several improvement areas, as identified from the research:

- Evolving the online learning to make it even easier to learn from.
- Finding ways to increase time spent with other puppy raisers and staff.
- Improving communications and how we recognise the efforts of our volunteers.
- Carrying on listening.

What about fostering?

Fosterers look after guide dogs in training in the evenings and at weekends – dropping them off for training on weekday mornings and collecting them in the evenings. It's ideal for those who would love to have a dog at home but can't be there for them during the daytime, due to work or other commitments.

Fosterers do need to apply the basic training that we give our dogs in their home but don't worry, we teach all fosterers bespoke Guide Dogs training techniques (which you can use with your own dog, or even to build skills for a career in dog handling!).

As well as giving a future guide dog a loving home during this all-important stage in their lives, being a Guide Dogs fosterer is a great way to spend more time outside, get fitter and welcome a wonderful new companion into your home.

To find out more, visit guidedogs.org.uk/volunteer.

Congratulations to our new partnerships

New partnerships are listed by community team. Each listing details owner, guide dog, town, breed, Puppy Raiser, Breeding Dog Holder and Fosterer. Warm congratulations to all our new qualifiers.



Belfast

Suzanne Craig & Flame from Londonderry
L Linda Rosborough from Edinburgh * Sian Simmons from Kenilworth.
Ms Wendy Medlicott from Coventry. Mr Kyle Hunter from Kirriemuir.

Sara Ghaffaripour & Elizabeth from Belfast
GRxGR Stephanie Scott from Edinburgh.
* Sandra Boden from Rugeley. Miss Katherine Haynes from Forfar.

Robert Robinson & Prince from Antrim GRxL
Valerie Macaulay from Dunfermline. Miss Fiona Brunton from Forfar.

Margaret Steele & Biscuit from Biggar
LxGR Moira McCully from Airdrie, Mark Berman from Glasgow * Christina Kearney from Shrewsbury.
Mr Stan Cooper from Warwick. Mrs Laura Stewart from Dundee.
Mr Michael Armer from Downpatrick.

Joanna Toner & Emba from Lisburn GRxL Alison Lovie from Aberdeen *
Miss Pamela Alexander from Brechin.

Birmingham

Richard Barrett & Bobbie from Milton Keynes GRxL
Sarah Barker from Great Alne * Cath Pedreschi from Evesham. Mrs Andrea Gill from Northampton.
Mrs Andy and Sue Bowden from Kenilworth.

Phillip Hancock & Pennie from Nottingham L
John Haslam from Wollaton * Sarah Kite from Birmingham.
Mrs Tricia Collier from Warwick. Mr Maurice Wright from Warwick.

Roy Hefti & Cassie from Worcester GRxGR Jane Ekins from Leamington

Spa * Jane Ekins from Leamington Spa.
Mr Paul Black from Solihull. Mr Gregory Hall from Southam.

Nicola Hughes & Fabio from Wisbech LxGR Tony Jose from Woodhall Spa
* Michael Spelman from Coventry. Mr Christopher Watts from Warwick.

Heather Johnson & Kona from Birmingham
LxGR Alexandra Boyce from Henley-in-Arden
* Mrs Natalie Jarvis from Leamington Spa.

Eileen Simmonds & Luna from Birmingham GRxL
Michelle Andrews from Nottingham. Mrs Claire Martindale from Warwick.

Mark Turnham & Reg from Birmingham LxGR Fiona Trimble from Nottingham
* Amber O'Brien from Warwick. Mrs Carol Clarke from Rushden.
Miss Lauren Grainger from Leamington Spa.

Cardiff

Alan Garner & Dane from Swansea LxGR Maggie McNulty from South Petherton * Elizabeth Parker from Coventry. Mr Peter Meads from Warwick.

Chris Gibbs & Hector from Cardiff L Julie Matthews from Keynsham * Joy Davis from Leicester. Miss Sarah Sheasby from Bromsgrove.

Nigel Hughes & Bella from Wrexham GRxL
Yvonne Clough from High Wycombe * Sue Wilkins from Rugby. Mrs Sue Adams from Cardiff.

Carys Llewellyn & Elmo from Swansea GRxL
* Miss Sarah Morgan from Cardiff.

Judith Lombardo & Gwen from Swansea
GR Kelly Ducker from Eastleigh * Linda Sheehan from Evesham.

Mark Roberts & Forest from Bangor GRxL Steve Topham from Lydney.

Coventry

Sheila Armstrong & Peach from Market Harborough GR Claire Webster from Sutton Coldfield * Fiona & Debbie Reedy & Baird from Evesham. Mrs Emma Dunstone from Leamington Spa.

Elizabeth Clegg & Bramble from Loughborough
LxGR Hannah Simpson from Shrewsbury * Sylvia Burgess from Buckingham. Mrs Dulcie Parry from Rugby.
Mrs Clare Topping from Kenilworth.

Adrian Higginbotham & Reggie from Rugby
LxGR Howard Lewis from Leatherhead * Sylvia Burgess from Buckingham.
Mrs Dulcie Parry from Rugby. Mrs Kerry Law from Warwick.

Kevin Satizabal & Nellie from Roade GRxL Chris Usher from Ilkeston * Cath Pedreschi from Evesham.
Mrs Andrea Gill from Northampton. Mrs Jane Cornish from Warwick.

Tracey Sheldon & James from Blaby CCRxL * Steve Parsons from Melksham.
Mr Adam Fincham from Leamington Spa. Mrs Sally Ingham from Rugby.

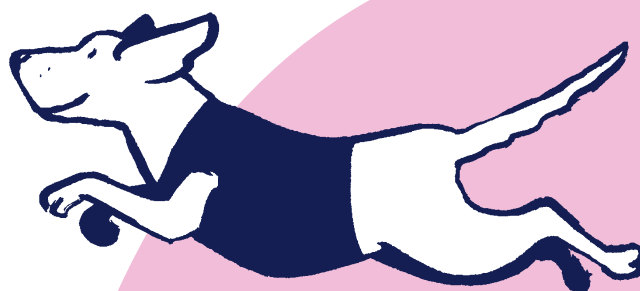
Phil Smalley & Troilus from Leicester GRxL Suzanne Beechey from Leigh-on-Sea
* Adrian Newitt from Leamington Spa. Mr & Mrs Pete Williams from Droitwich. Miss Barbara Sowerby from Coventry.

Roger Woolgrove & Henry from Daventry
GRxGR Carl Wright from Ashby-de-la-Zouch *
Mr Paul Albrecht from Stratford-upon-Avon.
Mr Andrew Walling from Warwick.

Edinburgh

June Farrell & Hamish from Livingston GRxGR
Rosemary Cameron from Forfar * Sandra Boden from Rugeley. Mrs Victoria Robb from Forfar. Mr Calum Crosby from Forfar.

Kenneth Featherstone & Wendy from Stirling
L Iain McLachlan from Forfar * Jackie Page from Coventry. Mrs Pauline Belton from Didcot. Miss Gill Stott from Edinburgh.



New partnerships

Michael Laidlaw & Violet from Carnoustie GRxL
* Patricia Hicks from Sutton Coldfield. Mrs Kerry Walker from Montrose.

Lisa Reid & Gouldy from Dundee GRxGR Peter Pharoah from Edinburgh
* Sandra Boden from Rugeley. Miss Jenna Ogilvie from Brechin.

Theresa Robberts & Kaz from Montrose GR Richard Warwick from Dalkeith, Elizabeth Ramage from nr Dalkeith * Susan Griffiths from Derby. Miss Alison Glen from Forfar.

Exeter

Nigel Ashby & Casper from Dawlish L Loraine Beever from Cowes * Sharon Bailey from Measham. Mrs Tricia Collier from Warwick. Miss Hannah Blackburn from Exeter. Mr Darren Howard from Honiton.

Rachel Dunn & Saffie from Torquay LxGR Alexandra Goolding from Plymouth * Leigh Court from Balsall Common. Mrs Ann Taylor from Teignmouth.

Gary Dymott & Rory from Bude GRxGSD Jo Stradling from Langport * Amanda Turner from Telford. Mrs Joanne Burchell from Ottery St. Mary.

Michelle Fear & Sparkey from Bridgwater GR Josephine Daykin from Taunton * Donna Hunt from Lutterworth. Mrs Angela De Vorchik from Basingstoke.

Annetta Haigh & Churchill from Melksham L * Christina Sibbald from Wantage. Mrs Sharon Broer from Coventry. Mrs Priscilla Heaton from London.

Malcolm Hough & Bingley from Bargoed LxGR Linda Richards from Swansea * Philip Maycock from Bromsgrove. Mr Allyn Usher from Bristol.

William & Marley from Bristol L Linda Hole from Bristol * Sue Padget from Kettering. Dr Yvette Russell from Bristol.

Carole Morgan & Jason from Cardiff GRxGR Lyn Pressman from Swindon,

Eric Booth from Bristol
* Hayley Kerfoot from Stourbridge. Mr Adrian Claxton from Warwick.

Zoe Norman & Luna from Penryn L John Horn from Brixham * Miss Sarah Sheasby from Bromsgrove. Ms Chui Fan Lee from Exeter.

Sharon O'Callaghan & Quintin from Martock L Robert Taylor from Bath * Catherine Gray from Brackley. Miss Rachel Ashley from Nuneaton. Miss Charlotte Stephens from Bristol.

Graham Procter & Kirk from Torquay L Maggie McNulty from South Petherton * Helen Benson from Redditch. Miss Sarah Sheasby from Bromsgrove. Mrs Claire McCrone from Leamington Spa.

Stephen Seaton & Penny from Bristol LxGR Mary Chaplin from Chelmsford * Helen Sergison from Dudley. Mrs Danielle Vaughan from Wigston. Mrs Doreen Legrand from Woodford Green.

Steven White & Monty from Bedminster GRxL Anne Cole from Swindon
* Linda Langman from Axminster. Daniela Esposito from Reading. Ms Carolyn Porter from Tadley.

Gary Winfield & Bill from Torpoint GSD Danielle Scott from Camberley
* Trudy Evans from Coventry. Mrs Victoria Rash from Kenilworth.

Glasgow

James Black & Rocky from Newmilns L Ronald Hurst from Glasgow, Margaret Tanner from Prestwick * Chris Higgins from Banbury. Mrs Jane Hargrave from Daventry. Mr John Moore from Strathaven.

Chris Clark & Dream from Erskine GR Catherine Reid from Strathaven * Andrea Kane from Leamington Spa.

Lorna Houston & Unity from Glasgow GRxL Denise Henry from Ayr * Sue Davy from Oldbury. Mr Michael Rudge from Solihull. Mrs Moyra Gibb from Larkhall.



Margaret Kelly & Opal from Glasgow GR Mark Berman from Glasgow * Linda Mallette from Worcester. Mrs Sarah Sharples from Hamilton.

Anya Kettles & Alice from Perth GRxGR Leza Begg from Arbroath * Jane Ekins from Leamington Spa. Mr Paul Black from Solihull. Mr David Troup from Forfar.

Julian Malins & Bill from Galashiels L Moira Watson from Ayr * Sharon Bailey from Measham. Mrs Tricia Collier from Warwick. Mr Simon Corrie from Forfar.

Irene McLure & Oriya from Glasgow GRxL Linda Whitehead from Broxburn * Margaret Langford from Warwick. Mr Craig Anderson from Forfar. Mrs Anne Millar from Larkhall.

Elaine Perry & Arthur from Wishaw GSD Sandra Buchan from Dundee * Victoria Rash from Kenilworth. Mr William McGregor from Forfar.

Graeme Roache & Oscar from Dumbarton GR Douglas Walker from Ardrossan, Craig Herbert from Glasgow * Donna Isard from Coventry. Mr Jonathan Wilson from Forfar.

Helen Sockell & Vera from Kilmarnock GRxL Sylvia Clark from Erskine * Mrs Lesley Wilson from Forfar.

Hull

Sheelagh Robinson & Penny from Dewsbury GR James Gilbride-Hobbs from Preston * Ms Tracie Garner from Manchester. Mrs Kwai White from Beverley.

John Sargeant & Rolly from Pickering L Stephanie Clements from Leeds, Joseph Davies from Liverpool, Bobby Owens from Liverpool * Sharon Bailey from

Measham. Mrs Tricia Collier from Warwick. Mrs Michaela Bowden from Manchester. Mr Paul Winter from Beverley.

Leeds

Guy Cross & Philip from Otley GRxL Lisa Allott from Wakefield, John Pearson from York * Patricia Hicks from Sutton Coldfield. Ms Joan Windle from Sheffield.

Richard Fisher & Buddy from Sowerby Bridge STPxL Marian Boyden from Richmond * Mrs Linda Landsberg from Milton Keynes. Ms Alison Binalle from Newcastle upon Tyne.

Tracy Hamilton & Megan from Leeds L Teresa Ferguson from Birkenhead, Louise Craig from New Ferry * Mary Smith from Moreton-in-Marsh. Mrs Carol Clarke from Rushden. Mrs Sharon Sudlow from Bolton.

Guy Keating & Sandra from Bradford GR * Fiona & Debbie Reedy & Baird from Evesham. Mr Peter Thurling from Bingley.

Lindsey Moore & Iris from Cleckheaton GRxL Alison Specht from Baildon * Sue Davy from Oldbury. Mr Michael Rudge from Solihull.

Stephen Spamer & Bruce from Hull L Jayne Little from Northallerton * Mary Smith from Moreton-in-Marsh. Mrs Carol Clarke from Rushden.

Graham Wilkey & Riley from Ripon L Susan Hydes from Wakefield * Christina Sibbald from Wantage. Mrs Sharon Broer from Coventry. Rev Jack Parkes from Leeds.

Liverpool

Charles Jones & Katy from Great Boughton GRxGR Christine Spratt

from Rugeley * Mrs Denise Hipwell from Stafford. Mrs Alison Niemiec from Manchester.

Lisa Nicholas & Zola from Liverpool L Linda Moors from Burnley * Linda Langman from Axminster. Mrs Sally Thomas from Worcester. Ms Wendy Parkinson from Leigh.

Lisa Speed & Nessa from Wirral L Anita Mortimer from Pontefract * Martin & Paula Hendrick from Telford. Miss Amanda Hancocks from Daventry. Mr Michael Stewart from Lowton.

Gillian Wake & Mark from Hoylake GR Brenda Copnall from Manchester * Andrea Kane from Leamington Spa. Mrs Kim Walker from Manchester.

London

Brian Bennett & Errol from Hounslow LxGR Sara Burrell from Maldon * Michael Spelman from Coventry. Ms Jaiya Nerotra from Ilford.

Paul Johnstone & Babs from Mitcham LxGR Maggie Speirs from Sevenoaks * Elizabeth Evans from Droitwich. Mr Hugh Brown from Coventry. Mrs Roanne Insley from London.

Simon Jones & Polly from Epsom GR Natalie Mutton from Plymouth * Linda Sheehan from Evesham. Mrs Elzbieta Grzybek from London.

Mariza Jürgens & Dottie from Surbiton GRxGR * Jane Ekins from Leamington Spa. Mr Paul Black from Solihull. Ms Veronica Rechten from London.

Maggie Moore & Link from London GRxGR Julia McClellan from Leatherhead * Lindy

Howlett from Bromyard. Ms Sophia Scott from Highbury Grove.

Charlotte Nickson & Daphne from London GR * Trudy Stables from Banbury. Mr Paul Crowe from Kenilworth. Miss Mirjam Bellaard from London.

Lorraine Offord & Theia from London LxGR Fiona Jones from Sawbridgeworth * Amber O'Brien from Warwick. Mrs Carol Clarke from Rushden.

Darren Paddick & Penny from Surrey L David King from London * Ann Buxton from Leicester. Mrs Kim Roberts from Stratford-upon-Avon. Mr David King from London. Ms Melanie Read from London.

Graham Philip Routledge & Nevis from Dunmow GRxL Christopher Matthews from Hornchurch * Donna Hunt from Lutterworth. Mrs Louise Millard from Lutterworth. Mrs Jane Pearce from St Albans. Mrs Gillian Herbert from Loughton, Miss Jade Brooke from Chelmsford.

Gabrielle Schneider & Cain from London STPxL Stacey Crampton from Chelmsford * Gail Winnett from Birmingham. Mrs Linda Landsberg from Milton Keynes. Dr Caroline McGlynn from Ilford.

Tony Sutton & Tyson from Ealing LxGR Richard Milestone from Leyburn, John Pearson from York * Elizabeth Evans from Droitwich. Mr Hugh Brown from Coventry.

Stephen Vallance & William from Sidcup GRxGSD Maggie Speirs from Sevenoaks * Mrs Catherine Egan from Worcester.

New partnerships

Maidstone

Janice Algar & Katie from Swanscombe GRxL Sandra March from Maldon, Peter Sillett from Witham * Marie Lee-Hopps from Redditch. Mr Michael Rudge from Solihull. Mr Stephen Hathaway from St Albans.

Neil Brooks & Digger from Thanet LxGR * Miss Rachel Ashley from Nuneaton. Mr Chris West from Maidstone.

Derek Burke & Brodie from Carshalton CCRxL Sarah Bailey from Maidstone, Brian Killick from Sheerness * Steve Parsons from Melksham. Mr Adam Fincham from Leamington Spa. Mr Simon Cope from Maidstone.

Daniel Ellman-Brown & Coco from St Leonards-on-Sea GRxGSD Carole Arrowsmith from Alton * Christine Collins from Leamington Spa. Mr Paul Black from Solihull. Mrs Jessica Massey from Maidstone.

Richard Greenwood & Barrett from Deal GSD Joanna Wareham from Clevedon * Mrs Amanda Harrison from Maidstone.

Freddy Ireland & Tyson from Littlehampton LxGR Barry Addy from Swanley, Marilyn Addy from Swanley * Philip Maycock from Bromsgrove. Mrs Trudy Cornford from Maidstone.

Manchester

Kevin Crompton & Alan from Morecambe GSD Mark Wilson from Southport * Trudy Evans from Coventry. Mrs Victoria Rash from Kenilworth. Mr Robert O'Connor from Manchester. Miss Elle Gascoyne from Manchester.

Charles Doherty & Taylor from Morecambe LxGR Pamela Reeve from Nantwich * Lisa Smith from

Warwick. Miss Eleanor Stretch from Bolton.

Jennie Harrison & Brandy from Didsbury L Jenny Summersby from Wirral * Sarah Kite from Birmingham. Mrs Tricia Collier from Warwick. Mrs Lisa Tonge from Leigh.

Loretta Hurst & Ivy from Manchester L Claire McLeish from Northwich * Mrs Sheila Hemming from Evesham. Mrs Jill Blaxter from Bolton.

Kim Johnson & Zivah from Macclesfield LxL * Sue Lancaster from Bedford. Mr Peter Meads from Warwick. Miss Ella Mackenzie from Bolton.

Alix Lange & Tegwen from Manchester GRxL Roger Huskisson from High Peak * Ann Buxton from Leicester.

Stacey Morgan & Waffle from Darwen GRxL * Helen Hinchliffe from Derby. Mr Mark Edwards from Warwick. Mrs Emma Walsh from Leigh.

Katie Price & Patch from Warrington L Alison Cooke from Wirral, Nikki Harrison from Liverpool * Sarah Kite from Birmingham. Mrs Tricia Collier from Warwick. Mr Chris Nightingale from Manchester.

Orla Niamh Raftery & Bobby from Sale L Anne Silvester from Sheffield * Beryl Wyrko from Leicester. Ms Wendy Medlicott from Coventry. Mrs Lynn Soper from Bolton.

Newcastle

Sophie Courtney & Berry from Leeds GRxL Carlton Reid from Newcastle upon Tyne, Judith Reid from Newcastle upon Tyne * Adele Sullivan from Banbury. Mr & Mrs Wetherell from Birmingham. Dr Judith Reid from Newcastle upon Tyne.

Helen Davies & Ross from Bradford STPxL Wendy Bell from Redcar * Gail Winnett from Birmingham. Mrs Linda Landsberg from Milton Keynes. Mrs Pat Martin from Middlesbrough.

Patricia Rescigno & Hesketh from Morpeth GRxGR Adrian Chew from Bacup * Miss Sarah Willis from Manchester. Mr Ian Stephenson from Chester-le-Street.

Lynda Rhodes & Taggart from Hebburn LxGR Anne Lindley from Wirral, Alison Cooke from Wirral * Sylvia Burgess from Buckingham. Mrs Dulcie Parry from Rugby. Miss Imogen Latham from Manchester. Mrs Karen Piper from Newcastle upon Tyne.

June Robson & Isobel from Sunderland GRxGR Bethany Hudson from North Shields * Sandra Boden from Rugeley. Miss Lizzie Spencer from Newcastle upon Tyne.

Paul Smith & Sally from Houghton-le-Spring GRxL Helen McEvoy from Liverpool * Ann Buxton from Leicester. Mrs Nikki Nicholls from Manchester.

Nottingham

Lindsey White & Lulu from Witham St Hughs GRxL Jan Condron from Baldock * Terry Crane from Kidlington. Miss Emily Hogg from Leamington Spa. Ms Rebecca Adamson from Sutton-in-Ashfield.

Peterborough

Peter Billington & Kira from North Walsham L Shantelle Willmott from Cambridge, Jennifer Herrin from Newmarket * Donna Hunt from Lutterworth. Mrs Sally

Thomas from Worcester. Miss Claire Huxley from Leamington Spa.

Robert Fox & Zena from Felixstowe GRxL * Lorraine Johnson from Market Harborough. Mrs Barbara Stone from Kenilworth.

Edward Moore & Max from Norwich L Lesley Edwards from Rugby * Margaret Reynolds from Rugby. Mrs Pamela Griffiths from Coventry. Mrs Pauline Williams from Warwick.

Peter Skivington & Buddy from Peterborough LxGR Rachel Gregory from Nottingham * Sylvia Burgess from Buckingham. Mrs Dulcie Parry from Rugby. Mrs Karen Bird from Leamington Spa. Miss Eloise Green from Peterborough.

Shrewsbury

Kay Bailey & Ellison from Stoke-on-Trent L Pamela Deabreu from Bloxwich * Christina Sibbald from Wantage. Mrs Sharon Broer from Coventry. Mrs Jacky Ruston from Telford.

Joshua Downing & Cally from High Peak LxGR Kathleen Underwood from Telford * Stuart Toulson from Bridgnorth. Miss Deepal Desai from Manchester, Mr Paul Richards from Shrewsbury.

Alistair Dunbar & Banjo from Willenhall L * Mary Smith from Moreton-in-Marsh. Mrs Carol Clarke from Rushden. Mr Paul Richards from Shrewsbury.

David Heeley & Peter from West Bromwich GR June Bagnall from Wirral, Helen Lance-Marsden from Liverpool * Trudy Stables from Banbury. Mr Paul Crowe from Kenilworth. Mrs Mary Carey from Shrewsbury.

Amanda Lee & Poppy GRxGR Nicola Rollinson from Wirral * Hayley Kerfoot from Stourbridge. Mr Adrian Claxton from Warwick. Mrs Maggie Meyrick from Shrewsbury.

Trevor Newton & Betty from Willenhall GRxL Denise Crawford from Radcliffe * Ann Buxton from Leicester. Mr Graham Parry from Shrewsbury.

Alan Roberts & Alfie from Shrewsbury GRxL Major Alan Dobson from Newcastle upon Tyne * Mr Michael Rudge from Solihull. Mrs Christina Jones from Atherton.

Marie Stent & Isobel from Stoke-on-Trent L Sheila Etchells from Macclesfield * Sarah Hicks from Solihull.

Mrs Pauline Belton from Didcot. Mr Justin Wyke from Shrewsbury.

Southampton

Kevin Kitching & Riley from Petersfield GSD Frances West from Colyton * Sharon Faulkner from Coventry. Mrs Yasmin Evans from Eastleigh.

Kim O'Shea & Sugar from Newbury L Alexandra Elstub from Ashted * Lyn Bushell from Daventry. Mrs Lin Lisle from Alcester. Mr Andrew Capper from Reading.

Michelle Waters & Cooper from Eastleigh L * Margaret Reynolds from Rugby. Mrs Pamela Griffiths from Coventry.

Mrs Nicola Merrick from Eastleigh.

Welwyn Garden City

Heather Buckingham-Jones & Koby from Harlow L Matthew Harper from Yateley * Donna Hunt from Lutterworth. Mrs Sally Thomas from Worcester. Mrs Eve Farraud from Romford.

Stephen Hughes & Wilfred from Chelmsford L Susan Ding from Colchester * Lyn Bushell from Daventry. Mrs Lin Lisle from Alcester. Mrs Liz Smithson from London.

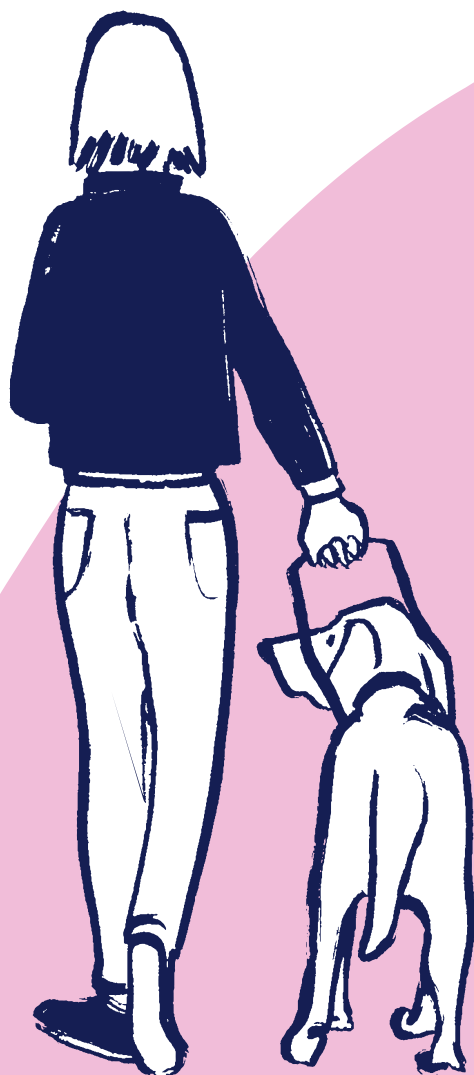
Anthony Phillips & Angus from Grays GRxGR Susan Dyson from Exeter * Shirley Thomas from Daventry.

Mr Barry Holtom from Warwick. Mrs Jolanta Rukas from Ilford.

Kayleigh Rogers & Ola from Basildon GRxL Courtney Buchanan from Melksham * Mr Robert Li from Woodford Green.

Lins Truss & Kinzie from Ilford LxGR Irene Harman from Bognor Regis, Susan Keen from Shaftesbury * Helen Sergison from Dudley. Mrs Danielle Vaughan from Wigston. Ms Kate Kelly from Ilford.

Peter Waller & Ashley from St Albans L * Sue Padget from Kettering. Mrs Victoria Millar from Chigwell.



Call Diane, the (puppy) midwife!

I want to pay tribute to my wife, Diane Merker, who's looked after guide dog mums in our home for 30 years, and can reflect on 20 litters and 155 puppies!

Diane has never had a dull moment supporting both dogs who took to motherhood like ducks to water, and others who would rather be off playing with a football in the garden. There have been many interesting memories including when one puppy, who was seemingly stillborn, came back to life hours after the birth was over. Another pup, just a few seconds old, rolled off the weighing scales and fell behind the freezer. Minutes later, after dismantling some of the kitchen, we found



the little fella happily sleeping on some central heating pipe insulation.

As she awaits a litter from our seventh guide dog mum, Ellie, I wonder what the next 30 years will hold!

With kind regards,
Colin Merker

Caption competition



Rebecca Alexander, a puppy raiser, fosterer and fundraiser from Perthshire, Scotland, sent a photo from her American friend, Martha, who supports seeing eye dog charities across the pond. Martha's three golden retriever pet dogs, JJ, Sierra and their son Bodie, are living their best beach life in Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

What would you caption this photo?

Send your suggestions to:

Forward, Guide Dogs, Hillfields, Burghfield Common, Reading, RG7 3YG or email forward@guidedogs.org.uk with your name, address and a daytime phone number.

The winner gets a £10 Marks and Spencer voucher.



The last competition winner is Ann Moorhouse, from Cheadle in Staffordshire, with the caption "They've just had a big feed so now they're all feeling a bit stuffed." Congratulations, Ann!

Competition rules

This competition is open to anyone resident in the UK, except employees of the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, their families and anyone connected with the competition. No purchase necessary. Proof of posting cannot be accepted as proof of delivery. No responsibility can be accepted for entries delayed, damaged or mislaid or wrongly delivered. Illegible entries will be disqualified. Only one original entry is allowed per envelope. The winners will be notified by either post or telephone and the results will be published in the next issue of the magazine. The winners must agree to the publication of their names, photographs and any publicity, if requested. In all matters concerning the competition the Editor's decision is final. No correspondence can be entered into. Entry implies acceptance of the rules. The closing date for the competition is **31 January 2023**.

Pets at Home shoppers help our 'VIP' dogs

Pets at Home shoppers have been helping our dogs in training by supporting Guide Dogs through the VIP Club loyalty scheme. By using their VIP card when shopping, they've been earning 'Lifelines' vouchers for us – at no additional cost to them! Our teams use these vouchers to buy essentials to help train our future life-changing dogs.

Here are some of the ways the vouchers help...

Our Hull Community Team

said: "The vouchers allow us to buy toys to ensure our dogs are entertained and mentally stimulated during their downtime. The beds we've purchased give them comfortable spaces to relax in after their training, which benefits their learning and progress in becoming a guide dog."

Our Puppy Team said: "We've purchased fabric crates to transport solo puppies, making the journey less daunting than sitting in the crate at the back of the van on their own. We also buy items for puppy placement packs and puppy classes. This makes a big difference to the experience we can offer our volunteers."

Our Forfar Regional Centre in Scotland said:

"We purchase high-value treats that trainers use for training the dogs when their kibble is not motivating enough. The dogs usually receive a Kong filled with their frozen kibble when they arrive in the morning. The dogs love this – it gives them a good association with coming to kennels."

Howard Jones, our Regional Academy Manager, said:

"We've been able to buy enrichment toys, which especially helps dogs who need limited exercise due to illness or injury. They are invaluable for keeping our dogs entertained, stimulated and occupied."

To support us through the Pets at Home VIP Club, visit vip.petsathome.com.



Children get new 'best buddies' thanks to support from players of People's Postcode Lottery

Thanks to players of People's Postcode Lottery, their support is helping to fund our buddy dog service this year. Buddy dogs are former trainee guide dogs that have had a career change. They are companions for children with sight loss to help them develop self-confidence, improve relationships and build trust in themselves and others. Children like Cammy, whose buddy dog Urwin has made a positive difference to his life. Cammy's dad, George, said: "We always wanted a family dog as we knew the benefits it would bring to Cammy, but it just wasn't going to be possible. Then we discovered the buddy dog service, and now Urwin is part of the family."



Support Guide Dogs

Donate your Nectar points via Crowdfunder



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