

GUIDE  
DOGS



**Poppy**

**Pupdate 6**

**The perfect match**

**Stephen and Poppy**

**SPONSOR  
A PUPPY**



# Thank you for sponsoring Poppy



**Hello, it's Stephen here, Poppy's new owner. We are loving life together and I can't thank you enough for your support.**

I was living in Spain and working at an IT company, on the verge of an exciting career, when I was forced to leave the job I loved due to my sight becoming severely impaired. I was born with a condition which caused my sight to gradually deteriorate over time and as I reached early adult-hood, I had next to no sight left.

## **A tough time**

When my sight deteriorated I really did hit rock-bottom and became very depressed. I was very uncertain about the direction my life was going to take as my independence and freedom had been taken from me. However today, with Poppy by my side, it's a different story.

I first began training to use a white cane which helped improve my mobility slightly, but I still couldn't get around confidently as I was very restricted by my surroundings. I decided to apply for a guide dog and as I was living in Spain at the time, I trained at a Spanish training school with my first dog Keaton, who now lives with me and my family as a pet dog. When I relocated to the UK I applied for my first UK guide dog and that is when Poppy came into my life.



## **Partnership training**

Guide Dogs believed Poppy to be the perfect match for me and they weren't wrong! I began partnership training with my Guide Dogs Mobility Instructor, David, whose job it was to help me build a good bond with Poppy and ensure I understood the commands to give her so she can guide me successfully.

David and I began practicing my local routes together so that I could learn to trust Poppy's ability to guide me. Some of these routes are quite lengthy and so we broke them up into stages, with nice pit-stops in local cafes together. Some of my routes take us through a University campus, which is always busy with students, runners and other dogs. Poppy does so well to ignore these distractions and remain focused on getting me from A to B.

It wasn't long before I felt a bond forming with Poppy. David expressed how much of a good handler I was and how myself and Poppy had started to form the perfect team. A guide dog gives you all sorts of abilities that you don't have with a white cane; the limitations of a cane mean that that you are restricted by your surroundings but with a guide dog, those restrictions are removed.

## **Settling into home life**

Once Poppy and I completed our partnership training she was officially my new guide dog! She settled into home life with myself, my wife and my son and gets on wonderfully with Keaton, my retired guide dog.

I've spoilt Poppy with a whole basket of toys for her to play with but she has her favourite – a rope toy that she adores to play tug of war with.

**For more photos and a video of Stephen and Poppy,  
please visit: [guidedogs.org.uk/puppy-poppy](https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/puppy-poppy)**



We are currently carrying out lots of short walks to the shops and local areas and have even travelled on public transport together to a nearby town. I love to be active and walk lots, so I am slowly building up Poppy's

stamina so she can go on longer walks with me into the countryside.

(Continued overleaf)



**Poppy  
loves tug  
of war!**



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## Looking to the future

I am training for a marathon next year and Poppy allows me to remain fit and active so I can pursue the hobbies such as these. She provides me with such an efficient form of mobility as well as great companionship, I truly love her.

I hope you've enjoyed following Poppy's journey and watching her grow from a tiny puppy into an incredible life-changing guide dog. If it wasn't for Poppy, your ongoing support, and Guide Dogs I wouldn't be able to lead the life I want. Thank you.



## Your sponsor a puppy journey doesn't end here

Guide Dogs exists to provide life-changing services to the 360,000 people who are registered blind or partially sighted, and the two million people in the UK living with sight loss. Our ambition is for a future where every person with sight loss has the confidence and support to live their lives to the full.

**Your support makes this possible and we do hope you can continue helping our life-changing work. Your new puppy's amazing adventure to become a guide dog awaits!**

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