

## Hello and Happy New Year!

Welcome to the second edition of SG News – our newsletter for Special Guardians in Milton Keynes.

We hope you all had a fantastic festive period for Christmas and New Year!

2022 went very quickly for us, we made lots of progress with developing the support services for Special Guardians in Milton Keynes, and we are excited to continue this journey in 2023.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support and patience throughout 2022, and we look forward to working with you this year!

Please send us any pictures of your festive celebrations, and we may include them in the next Newsletter!

Let us know what your New Year's resolution is!

## What did we do in 2022?

We listened to feedback from our Special Guardians and started the 'revamp' of our new **Post-SGO Support Service!** We introduced you to our Support Workers, who are dedicated to supporting you and your family:

**Khushboo Shah – Social Worker**

**Grace Woodall – Social Work Assistant**



Let's do  
this  
together.

## Our Best Moments:

- We successfully celebrated Kinship Week at Milton Keynes City Council and held two events for our Kinship Carers, a lovely Afternoon Tea and a fun-filled trip to Drayton Manor.
- We met lots of amazing Special Guardians and Kinship Carers at the local Kinship Support Group and at our new monthly SG Drop-In Sessions.
- We worked alongside the Project Team who run the Holiday Activity and Food Programme to ensure that Special Guardians and their children can access activities and healthy meals during school holidays.

### More to come in 2023...

- The launch of our new **Information Pack** and **Website** to explain everything that you need to know in terms of your role and responsibility as a Special Guardian, what Milton Keynes City Council offer under the umbrella of Special Guardianship Support, and what services you can access.
- A new **Referral Process** for requesting support from our team and accessing services.
- **Annual Reviews** of SGO Support Plans and Needs Assessments.
- **More Training, Webinars and Resources** to keep you informed.
- Another Kinship Week **Celebration** in October 2023.

### How can we help you?

Coordinating services to work as a team around your family and advocating on your behalf.

Access to therapeutic assessments and interventions.

Signposting to specialist services, including training and clinical supervision.

Assessment of Needs to explore the support needs of your family.

General advice, guidance, and information around your role, including managing issues with behaviour, education, and family time (contact).

### Feedback about SG Support

We appreciate your roles as Special Guardians and want to support you and your families in the most effective way.

Once our work with your family is complete, we hope that you will complete a survey to share your feedback about our service and whether you feel we have made a difference.

if you have any ideas about how we can improve our service, please let us know!

Our role is to **support you in supporting your loved ones.**

We recognise that being a Special Guardian can often be a very challenging yet very rewarding role which requires support and understanding.

We will work alongside you to create a plan that works for your family and allocate resources based on what you need.

You can reach out to us at any time to request support, we now have a dedicated email address and helpline:



Post-SGO Support Helpline: 01908 253652



Email: [PostSGOSupport@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:PostSGOSupport@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

Our helpline is open from 09:00am to 5:00pm Mondays to Thursdays and 09:00am to 4:30pm on Fridays (excluding bank holidays).

If we do not answer your call immediately, please leave a voicemail message and we will get back to you on the next working day.

If your query is urgent, please contact our Fostering Duty Team on 01908 253206 or if it is out-of-hours then please contact the Emergency Social Work Team on 01908 265545.

## 2023 Drop-In Sessions

**Come and talk to us!**

The Post-SGO Support Service will be running regular drop-in sessions for SGs. This is a space to chat to our Support Workers and to other SGs in the community, you can get to know us, ask us any questions, and learn more about what we offer as a service.

Please join us at Pebbles Children's Centre (Newlyn Place, Fishermead, Milton Keynes, MK6 2LP) on the first Monday of every month (excluding bank holidays) from 10:00am to 11:30am.

9<sup>th</sup> January 2023

6<sup>th</sup> February 2023

6<sup>th</sup> March 2023

3<sup>rd</sup> April 2023



Milton Keynes City Council celebrated Kinship Week from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

Kinship Week is a national week to recognise and celebrate the support and care offered by Kinship Carers and Special Guardians.

We hosted two successful events to show our appreciation to Kinship Carers in Milton Keynes.

Thank you to everyone who attended, we hope you had a fabulous time.



## Afternoon Tea







Drayton Manor





If you would like to see something included in the next edition of the Newsletter, please email us!

## Tell us about you!

This Newsletter is made for you...we want to hear from you!

We would love to know what is happening in your lives – your successes, the big or small breakthroughs that you have made with your children, something that made you smile or laugh, or maybe something that you found interesting.

Write to us with something you want to share with other Special Guardians in your community – we just might feature it in the next Newsletter!

## Kinship Support Group

Being a Special Guardian can sometimes feel lonely and isolating, it can feel like you are living in a different world that nobody else understands. It can be helpful to meet people who are in a similar situation to you and who truly understand what life is like as a Kinship Carer.

Karon Jennings runs a Support Group for all Family and Friends Carers – anyone who is looking after a family or friends' child that can't live with their birth parents. There's no need to book, just pop in and chat.

The group meet every Thursday during term-time from 09:30am to 11:30am at Morrisons Westcroft District Centre in the Community Room at the rear of the restaurant. There are also virtual meetings on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of every month in the evening.

Please email Karon at [kinshipmk@outlook.com](mailto:kinshipmk@outlook.com) for further details.

*"The people I met were so lovely & made me feel very welcome." "It's great to meet other people in the same situation." "I think the group is great." "Finding the group made me feel stronger in being able to cope." "I don't feel so isolated." "Makes me feel as if I have some support."*

## SG 'Working Group'

Our support service is *for* you, that's why we need *your* help to shape it!

From January 2023 there will be a Special Guardian 'Working Group'.

Sharon Godfrey, Head of Corporate Parenting, and Jade Teale, Fostering Deputy Manager, will be working alongside Special Guardians – selected by you – to ensure that your voices are heard when decisions are made about our Support Service.

<b>January</b> <i>National Braille Literacy Month</i>	<b>February</b>	<b>March</b> <i>Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month</i> <i>National Women's History Month</i>
15 <sup>th</sup> – World Religion Day 22 <sup>nd</sup> – Chinese New Year (Rabbit)	11 <sup>th</sup> – National Make a Friend Day 12 <sup>th</sup> – Global Movie Day 14 <sup>th</sup> – Valentine's Day 17 <sup>th</sup> – Random Acts of Kindness Day 21 <sup>st</sup> – Shrove Tuesday (Pancake Day) 22 <sup>nd</sup> – Ash Wednesday	3 <sup>rd</sup> – World Book Day 8 <sup>th</sup> – International Women's Day 8 <sup>th</sup> – Holi Festival (Hindu) 8 <sup>th</sup> to 10 <sup>th</sup> – Hola Mohalla (Sikh) 17 <sup>th</sup> – St Patrick's Day 19 <sup>th</sup> – Mother's Day 20 <sup>th</sup> – World Storytelling Day 21 <sup>st</sup> – Shrove Tuesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> – Ramadan Begins (Islam) 26 <sup>th</sup> – Daylight Saving Time Starts
<b>April</b> <i>Stress Awareness Month</i> <i>National Volunteer Month</i>	<b>May</b> <i>National Foster Care Month</i>	<b>June</b> <i>LGBTQIA Pride Month</i>
1 <sup>st</sup> – April Fools' Day 6 <sup>th</sup> – Passover (Jewish) 7 <sup>th</sup> – Good Friday (Christian) 9 <sup>th</sup> – Easter Sunday (Christian) 10 <sup>th</sup> – Easter Monday (Christian) 21 <sup>st</sup> to 22 <sup>nd</sup> – Eid al-Fitr (Isla) 21 <sup>st</sup> – National Tea Day 22 <sup>nd</sup> – World Earth Day	1 <sup>st</sup> - May Day 4 <sup>th</sup> – Star Wars Day 15 <sup>th</sup> – International Day of Families 17 <sup>th</sup> – World Baking Day 29 <sup>th</sup> – National Biscuit Day	5 <sup>th</sup> – World Environment Day 18 <sup>th</sup> – Father's Day 21 <sup>st</sup> – World Music Day 28 <sup>th</sup> – Eid-al-Adha Begins (Islam)
<b>July</b> <i>National Picnic Month</i>	<b>August</b> <i>National Dog Month</i> <i>National Wellness Month</i>	<b>September</b> <i>National Suicide Prevention Month</i> <i>Self-Care Awareness Month</i>
3 <sup>rd</sup> – 'Thank You' Day 7 <sup>th</sup> – World Chocolate Week 30 <sup>th</sup> – International Day of Friendship	First Week – National Exercise with Your Child Week 13 <sup>th</sup> – Left-Handers Day	5 <sup>th</sup> – International Day of Charity 28 <sup>th</sup> – National Fitness Day
<b>October</b> <i>Black History Month</i> <i>National ADD/ADHD Awareness Month</i> <i>Kinship Care Week</i>	<b>November</b> <i>World Vegan Month</i>	<b>December</b> <i>National Human Rights Month</i>
1 <sup>st</sup> – National Grandparents Day 7 <sup>th</sup> – World Smile Day 10 <sup>th</sup> – World Mental Health Day 17 <sup>th</sup> - National Coffee Week 31 <sup>st</sup> – Halloween	5 <sup>th</sup> – Guy Fawkes Night 11 <sup>th</sup> – Remembrance Day 12 <sup>th</sup> – Diwali (Hindu, Sikh) 13 <sup>th</sup> – World Kindness Day 20 <sup>th</sup> – Universal Children's Day	7 <sup>th</sup> to 15 <sup>th</sup> - Hanukkah (Jewish) 9 <sup>th</sup> – Christmas Jumper Day 13 <sup>th</sup> – Hot Chocolate Day 25 <sup>th</sup> – Christmas Day 26 <sup>th</sup> – Boxing Day 31 <sup>st</sup> – New Years Day

Please send us any pictures of what you and your family get up to this year, and we may include them in the next newsletter!

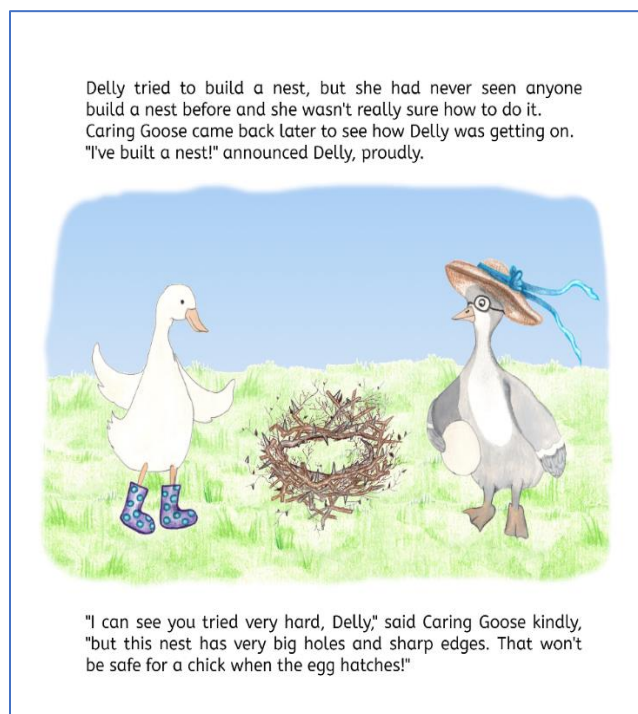
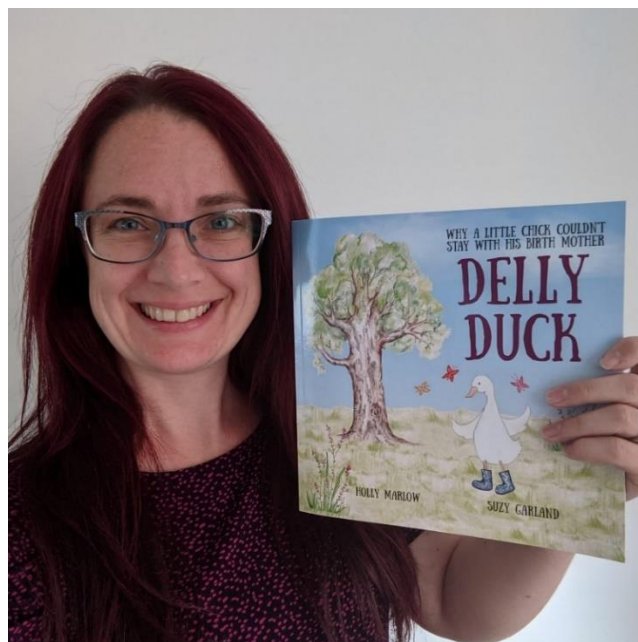
**Hello! I'm Holly Marlow.**

I have a 6-year-old biological daughter and a 3-year-old adopted son, who joined our family when he was 13 months old. We are still in contact with my son's foster family, including some children who have now moved to a kinship placement. My children ask a lot of questions, which have inspired me to write books about adoption, foster care and kinship care.

My first book, 'Delly Duck,' is written to help explain why some children cannot stay with their biological parents. The story includes metaphors that can be interpreted in a few different ways, depending on the child's life story.

Delly Duck frequently gets distracted chasing butterflies, forgetting to look after her egg, then her duckling when the egg hatches. This can be interpreted as a metaphor for an addiction that existed pre-birth and that Delly sadly does not overcome, or it might more simply represent memory and concentration problems due to the biological parent's own traumatic experiences, health issues or a learning disability.

The story includes a social worker called Caring Goose, who tries many times to help Delly Duck to learn how to parent safely. Delly does try, but even with Caring Goose's help, it becomes clear that Delly isn't able to keep her child consistently safe, so Caring Goose finds a family for him who will keep him safe. A lot of kinship carers contacted me and told me that they were finding this story helpful to explain why children can't stay with their biological parents, so I felt it was important to include a kinship family in my next book.



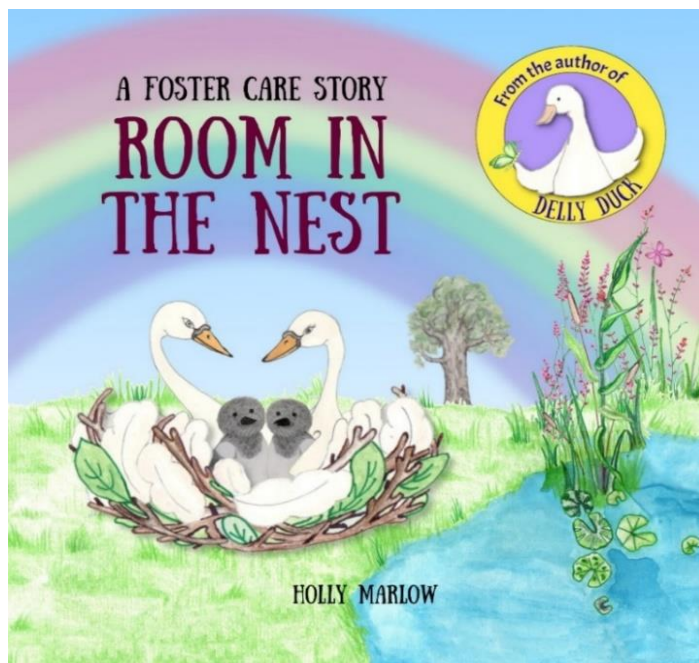


'Room in the Nest' is an inclusive story to help children to understand fostering, reunification, kinship care, adoption and the family court system. It shows how social workers explore the different options for a child, and the involvement of the judge. One of the families featured includes two little magpies, who end up in a kinship family with their grandparents.

It is important to me that adoptive, foster and kinship families are normalised, so I have started visiting schools in the area, and doing virtual visits with schools further afield, to read 'Room in the Nest' and talk about different kinds of families.

I hope that many of you will find these stories helpful for talking to children about kinship care.

*All of Holly's books are available on Amazon, and Holly is now booking school visits for 2023. For more information, visit [www.hollymarlow.com](http://www.hollymarlow.com)*



The Wise Owl decided that the best plan would be for the magpie chicks to live with their grandparents, who loved them and would keep them safe, as all little birds should be.



### Did you know?

Special Guardians are entitled to a FREE Library Card!  
Contact us for more details.



Here are some of our best resources, compiled by our team for you to use with the children in your care. If you find something particularly helpful, please let us know!



**The Kinship Care Charity** provide short, free, online **workshops** for Kinship Carers to help you to get the information that you need, including:

- **How to improve challenging behaviour and better develop your relationships at home.**
- **Preparing for sensitive conversations with kinship children.**
- **Understanding trauma and attachment in children.**
- **Better communication and the teenage years.**

One of our Special Guardians recently attended the '**Adoption Support Fund**' Workshop: *"It was very interesting and would benefit anyone who has or is thinking of getting an SGO. And they also have a very clear, concise, and precise video about what trauma is and how it affects the children. I would recommend it 100%"*.

**Join the Kinship Community** - <https://kinshippeersupport.org.uk/workshops/>

Thinking about training? Let us know and we can explore courses suited to you.

**Milton Keynes Professional Development Centre** run fantastic face-to-face courses, delivered by experts, around topics relevant to Special Guardians and their children:

- **Keeping Memories Alive (Life Story Work)**
- **Autism Reality Experience**
- **Signs of Safety**
- **Understanding, Responding to, and Managing Behaviour**
- **An Introduction to Theraplay**
- **Basic Counselling Skills**



## Attachment Difficulties VS Autistic Spectrum Disorder (Heather Moran)

The Coventry Grid attempts to summarise the differences between the behaviour of children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and those with significant attachment problems.

If you are considering whether the child that you look after has additional needs and/or attachment difficulties, it can be helpful to use the Coventry Grid to identify the symptoms of each disorder and assess these against the symptoms that your child displays.

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/virtual-school/coventrygrid.pdf>

## HelpGuide

**Help Guide** has lots of resources for mental health and wellbeing.

There are guides to helping children cope with trauma, as well as sections for different conditions such as ADHD, ASD, PTSD, trauma and other learning disabilities. It can also help you to help yourself.

<https://www.helpguide.org/>

**If you have something useful or interesting to share, please let us know!**

**It's helpful to learn something new.**