

SGO Newsletter

March 2024

Hello Everyone

Goodbye Winter and hello Spring!

Easter holidays are fast approaching, and with the lighter nights and *slightly* better weather arriving, we hope you have some exciting plans to look forward to. Whether going for walks, activity days, holidays, or just relaxing at home, we hope you enjoy!

We have lots to share with you, including:

- Group Meet Up
- Coffee Mornings running in Shropshire
- Meet the Team
- Information on the ASGSF (previously ASF)
- Understanding Pupil Premium
- Shropshire Virtual School
- Priority School Admissions
- Sleep Tight Workshops
- Family Information Services
- Shropshire Youth Hub
- Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme
- Measles Awareness
- Autism West Midlands Update
- Tricky Friends – a video for young people.
- Meet n Chat SEND
- Support Groups for Kinship Carers (*note the shrewsbury kinship carers group is open to kinship carers from anywhere within Shropshire!*)
- Emotional Coaching FREE training for special guardians of children previously looked after (see attached)

Group Meet Up

We have previously held coffee mornings in Shrewsbury and Oswestry, and were wondering about something a bit different where children/young people could come along, perhaps a *Walk and Talk* during one of the school holidays.

We will have to have a think about potential locations.

If you have a preference, please contact us and let us know SGO.Duty@shropshire.gov.uk . We will share a venue, date and time with you soon depending on responses.

Please share any ideas you may have as these are a great opportunity to share ideas, experiences and grow our support networks, so we would be most grateful for your ideas. We look forward to hearing from you.

Thank You

Coffee Mornings

We have learnt about other coffee mornings that are running in Shropshire, specifically for parents and those caring for someone with a hidden difference. Why not go along....here are some details:



All parents and those caring for someone with a Hidden Difference are invited to join us for a well earned

**SECRET HILLS
DISCOVERY
CENTRE,
CRAVEN
ARMS**

COFFEE BREAK

EVERY THURSDAY
Relaxed and informal.

ALL WELCOME
*wherever you find yourselves
on the journey*

**11
am**

www.empathyforspecialchildren.org

The poster features a yellow background with a white coffee cup on the left containing the text '11 am'. A dotted line path winds around the central text. A logo with colorful interlocking shapes is in the top left and bottom right. A circular icon with a list symbol is in the bottom right corner.



All parents and those caring for someone with a Hidden Difference are invited to join us for a well earned

**MEDIEVAL
MADNESS,
SHREWSBURY**

COFFEE BREAK

EVERY FRIDAY
Relaxed and informal.

ALL WELCOME
*with or without children
wherever you find yourselves on
the journey*

**10
am**

www.empathyforspecialchildren.org

The poster features a blue background with a white coffee cup on the left containing the text '10 am'. A dotted line path winds around the central text. A logo with colorful interlocking shapes is in the top left and bottom right.

Meet the team

Our team has grown, with Social Worker, Kathryn Lightwood joining us in January 2024....but for those of you who are new, here we are:

Amy Morgan:



I am Senior Social Worker, Special Guardianship Support. I came into post in November 2018. By now I am sure I have spoken to or met with most of you!

Prior to joining this role, I worked for Telford & Wrekin Children's Services from 2006 as Duty Desk Co-ordinator before gaining my Social Work Degree in 2015. I then moved to Shropshire Council, initially in the Assessment Team (mainly Child Protection and Children in Need level cases).

Outside of work I still find reasons to avoid going to the gym and instead pretend to do housework.

Jane Otter



In June 2022, I joined Amy as a Social Worker offering support to our Special Guardians.

Before qualifying as a social worker, I worked for Shropshire Council for 18 years, as a Teacher, Assistant Head Teacher and lastly as an Advisory Teacher for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Prior to joining child placement services, I spent a year in a case management team working with children and families in central Shropshire.

When not working I love rummaging in car boot sales and antique fairs (weather permitting). I am also slightly obsessed with Rightmove and seeking the perfect home that I will never be able to afford but can always dream about!

Kathryn Lightwood



I have recently joined the team as a Social Worker and am currently learning the role. I have spoken to a few Special Guardian's already, and really look forward to speaking with more of you...and hopefully meeting some of you face to face at our next coffee morning.

I qualified as a Social Worker in 2008, spending two years with Powys Local Authority, working in case management in the Children and Families Team.

I then moved to Fostering, working in the independent sector, starting as a Supervising Social Worker and progressing to Deputy Manager. During this time, I supported the 'step-down' process, for children moving from a residential provision to a foster family, something I felt, and still do, feel passionately about.

More recently I spent three years as an Assessment Manager, working across the midlands, before moving to Shropshire in my current role. I'm excited about this opportunity. I have lots to share, and lots to learn...a good combination I think!

The Adoption and special Guardian Fund (ASGSF) previously called the Adoption Support Fund (ASF)

The ASGSF provides funds to Local Authorities to pay essential therapeutic services to address the impact of trauma/attachment. This is available where a child has previously been 'Looked After' but is now subject to an adoption order, SGO or Child Arrangements Order. Any application is subject to an SGO Assessment of Need to explore the need and eligibility. Please contact the SGO Support Team if you wish to discuss. More information can be found here: <https://www.first4adoption.org.uk/adoption-support/financial-support/adoption-support-fund/>

Pupil Premium

Introduced in 2011, the Pupil Premium is a sum of money given to schools each year by the Government to improve the attainment of eligible children.

This is based on research showing that children from low-income families perform less well at school than their peers.

Often, children who are entitled to pupil premium face challenges such as poor language and communication skills, lack of confidence and issues with attendance and punctuality. The pupil premium is intended to directly benefit the children who are eligible, helping to narrow the gap between them and their classmates.

Pupil Premium Plus:

This funding should be allocated direct to the child's school for a child who was looked after in care immediately before the granting of an SGO. You are responsible for making the child's school aware:

- That the child was classed as a child Looked After immediately before the SGO was granted
- That the school may therefore claim Pupil Premium Plus.

Pupil Premium funds are allocated directly to the school and the school directly manages the funds. The Virtual School/Virtual School Head is not involved. The child's Designated Teacher at the School should involve you in deciding how Pupil Premium Plus is used to support the child.

That teacher should be the main point of contact for queries about the Pupil Premium Plus funds and how they are used. It is important to note that Pupil Premium Plus is not a personal budget for individual children, therefore the school may decide to use it in a way that they think benefits all children who have been previously Looked After and according to children's needs.

Speak to the school, the SGO Support Team or refer to this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium>.

Please ensure the school records any eligible child in your care on the October Census for this each year to be paid to the school the following April.

Shropshire Virtual School

The Virtual School acts as a local authority champion to promote the progress and educational attainment of looked-after children so they achieve educational outcomes comparable to their peers. Ensuring that they receive a high-quality education is the foundation for improving their lives.

The school doesn't exist in real terms or as a building. Children don't attend it - they remain the responsibility of the school at which they're enrolled. The Virtual School is simply a team which has been created for the effective co-ordination of educational services at a strategic and operational level.

As from September 2018 there are now new duties for children previously looked after (PLAC). The Virtual School will be able to offer advice and information regarding the education of children living in Shropshire who were previously in care and are now subject to an adoption, special guardianship, or child arrangement order.

This means the Virtual School can:

- Respond to parental requests for advice and information, for example advice on school admissions in their area.
- Respond to requests for advice and information from providers of early education, designated teachers in maintained schools and academies, and providers of alternative provision in their area about individual children supported by the local authority. The VSH should develop or build on existing good working relationships with designated teachers for previously looked-after children in their area.
- Make general advice and information available to early years settings and schools to improve awareness of the vulnerability and needs of previously looked-after children, including good practice on identifying and meeting their needs, and guidance on effective use of the [pupil premium plus](#).

Not having parental responsibility for these children, the Virtual School wouldn't be entitled to monitor them, and the duties don't extend to taking on case work or actions. However, we aim to empower all our parents with the advice, information, and expertise that we've gathered, whilst supporting our children in care to ensure that all the children in our remit can fulfil their potential in school.

Shropshire Council is part of a '*regional permanence partnership*' – Together4Children - with Telford and Wrekin, Stoke and Staffordshire. Please see [the education support section on the Together4Children website](#) where you'll find resources and a link to the Education Planning tool (EP-PLAC), which can be used as a good practice tool in schools.

For any queries, please contact the Virtual School for further information and support:

Virtualschool@shropshire.gov.uk or phone 01743 250124.

Priority School Admissions/Support in School

Children who have previously been Looked After must be given priority for admission to the school of their carer's choice. Therefore, if changing schools or transitioning to secondary School, Special Guardians should make it clear on any admission forms that the Child/ren were previously Looked After and now subject to an SGO. There should be a Designated Teacher within the School who should be the initial point of contact to promote the child's education. They have responsibility for ensuring school staff understand and are supportive of children who were previously in the care system and subject to an SGO.

Sleep Tight Workshops.

The Parenting Team is offering free 5 week SLEEP TIGHT workshops either face to face to online from February 2024

These 5 week workshops cover:

- Recognising the role of sleep hygiene to improve sleep
- Identifying causes of sleep issues and appropriate practical strategies to try
- Completing sleep diaries and identifying potential sleep issues



To find out the dates and locations please visit the [FIS Directory](#)

Please do not hesitate to contact us directly if you have any questions: parenting.team@shropshire.gov.uk or give us a call on 01743 250950

Information to help families.

We wanted to give you an update on the Family Information Service (FIS), because although we've been running for nearly 24 years, there's still lots of families, and those supporting families, who don't fully know what we can offer and how we can help.

The Family information Service (FIS) is here to give families the info and resources they need to help their family life run a little smoother. We can help with anything and everything



to do with family life, whether that's something for parents or something for the children and young people. We are a free, universal service so anyone can use us. If you have a question, we are likely to be able to help find out information on services of support or resources, and we have some great tools for practitioners to be able to provide families with information themselves.

We can provide information on a wide range of topics, such as:

- Finding and paying for Ofsted registered childcare, including childminders, day nurseries, pre-school playgroups, out of school clubs and holiday clubs.
- Local baby and toddler groups
- Parenting support to understanding your pregnancy, or child/teen, their sleep, mental health
- Events, clubs, activities, and fun things to do in the school holidays, for all ages
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Family finances and the costs of living
- Family support such as relationships, bereavement
- Physical health and emotional wellbeing and mental health support
- Family relationships

Online Family Information Directory - www.shropshire.gov.uk/fis

Our Family Information Directory features information about local, regional and national services, groups, events and activities. It is searchable via category, area, distance from a specific postcode and age. We can also curate specific lists for practitioners and families. Some of our most popular lists are:

- [Parenting Workshops and Courses](#)
- [School Holiday Clubs](#)
- [Early Help and Community drop-in sessions](#)
- [Carer and Toddler groups](#)
- [Rhyme Time sessions at the Library](#)

Check out our Linktree page for a full list of lists and links!
<https://linktr.ee/shropshirefamilyinfo>

Social media

You can find lots of useful info, events, activities and things to do on the FIS social media pages, so make sure you tell parent carers – and follow along yourself to keep up to date with news. You'll find us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter/X

- <https://www.facebook.com/ShropshireFamilyInfo>
- <https://www.instagram.com/shropshirefamilyinfo/>
- <https://twitter.com/ShropFamilyInfo>

FIS telephone helpline - The telephone number is 01743 254400.

Email - ShropshireFIS@Shropshire.gov.uk

Online Family Information Request Form - [Shropshire Family Information Service \(FIS\) Information request form.](#)

Shropshire Youth Hub

DWP have been working with young people to support their employment needs with special events throughout the region over the past 12 months, and have launched their new Shropshire Youth Hub, collaboratively working with Shrewsbury Town FC Foundation, to introduce a programme that will support our Young People of Shropshire and Telford into work, working with key partners across the county.



Calvin Latham, Education & Employability Manager, Shrewsbury Town Foundation says; I am thrilled to announce the launch of the Youth Hub, a dynamic initiative that will serve as a catalyst for positive change in the lives of young people across Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin. This transformative hub is not just a physical space; it represents our commitment to providing comprehensive support, empowering the youth to unlock their full potential in education and employment. Together, we are shaping a future where opportunities and aspirations become a reality.

This is a fantastic opportunity for 16–24-year-old The Youth Hub team will be on hand to support young people through four key areas:

- Qualifications & training
- Health & wellbeing support
- Work experience
- Regular support sessions

DWP Work Coaches will be based at the hub who will be working closely with the Shrewsbury Foundation team. The hub will also take self-referrals, scan the QR code and complete the form.

Register using the following QR code:



Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF)

The HAF Programme in Shropshire: free holiday activities and food for eligible children and young people

Over the Easter/spring, summer and Christmas/winter holidays, schools, voluntary and community organisations and childcare providers are running holiday clubs across the county.

There are free places available on the HAF programme for children and young people aged four (reception class age) to 16, who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals.

There are also a limited number of free places available for children and young people on the HAF programme living in areas of high deprivation and/or from low-income households who are not in receipt of benefits related free school meals. These children and young people can be referred onto the programme by a professional. See Link and contact the SGO Support Team to discuss a referral if required <https://next.shropshire.gov.uk/holiday-activities-and-food-programme-haf/about-the-haf-programme/>

Measles – are you protected?

With an increase in cases of measles being seen across the West Midlands it's Families across Shropshire are being urged to check that you and your family members are up to date with their MMR vaccine.

Measles is a **very infectious** viral disease which means it can spread quickly among communities, such as schools and nurseries **if** people have **not** had two dose the MMR vaccine.

Children are offered the first vaccination at one year, and the second dose at three years and four months.

You can check whether you or your child are up to date with the MMR vaccines by looking in your child's personal child health record (PCHR), known as the [red book](#), through the NHS app, or by contacting your GP practice. If anyone has missed one or both doses of the MMR vaccine, they should contact their GP practice to book an appointment. It's never too late to catch up.

About measles

- The **first signs of measles** are:
- high temperature
- runny or blocked nose
- sneezing
- cough
- red, sore, watery eyes
- rash, which usually appears a few days after cold-like symptoms (sometimes it starts around the ears before spreading to the rest of the body)

What to do if you think your child has measles

- **Contact your GP by phone or call NHS 111** for advice.
- **Please do not just turn up to your GP, walk-in centre, or any other healthcare setting** without calling ahead, as **measles is very infectious** – the doctor will make special arrangements to see your child so that, if they have measles, they won't pass it to others.
- People **remain infectious until at least 4 days after the onset of the rash** – so they should stay off nursery/ school/ university/ work/ other group activities until then.

Further guidance is available:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/mmr-vaccine/>

Autism West Midlands Update

Early Help Drop Ins - Sunflower House, Kendal Road, SY1 4ES, Shrewsbury – We will be attending the drop-in sessions once a month. The drop-in sessions run from 9.30am -12.30pm – no need to book, just drop in.



Here is an overview of our upcoming events:

Teen Events – Actio All In (ages 11-17 years)

- 28th March – Carding Mill Valley
- 4th April – Attingham (to be confirmed)

Face to Face Parent Meetings

- 11th March - [Coffee and Chat - Shrewsbury Venue](#)

Book any of the above sessions at the below link:

<https://www.autismwestmidlands.org.uk/events/>

Weekly Teams Advice slots For those who would like some online advice we are offering this virtually via video appointments. Teams also works well on mobile phones. To book a 45 min advice appointment with a specialist autism advisor please book via our shop. If the dates/timings of our online advice appointments are not convenient for you, please contact us to make alternative arrangements. <https://shop.autismwestmidlands.org.uk/collections/events/products/copy-of-online-autism-advice-and-consultation-sessions-shropshire-county>

Virtual Support Group for Parents - Wednesday Mornings 10am - 11am & Wednesday Evenings 8pm - 9pm – 1st and 3rd Weds of each month (term time) Our online support groups meet twice a month via Teams. This is an opportunity to talk with other parents, share ideas, and offer support. We recommend that you have attended an online advice appointment with a member of the team before joining group sessions (link above).

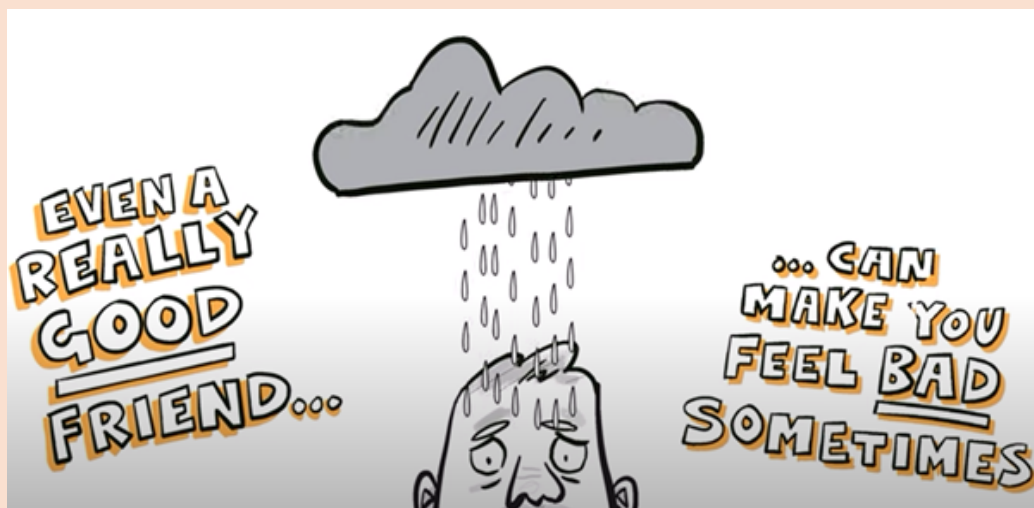
If you would like to join either of the support groups, please email the team here shropshire@autismwestmidlands.org.uk

Advice and support We also offer advice and support over the phone and via email. Parents/carers and professionals can contact the team directly to arrange an appointment including face-to-face if preferable. Shropshire office - 01952 454156

Email - shropshire@autismwestmidlands.org.uk

Tricky Friends

Have you seen this great Shropshire video for young people on what to do if they may have concerns about tricky friends? It covers what a good friend looks like, explores situations that might make a young person feel uncomfortable and offers advice on what to do if they do have [tricky friends](#).



Meet n Chat SEND

Hosted by Shropshire Early Help

A chance for families of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to get support with general SEND enquires. You can chat with people from Early Help, Education, Health and the Parent and Carer Council (PACC)

The theme for the Spring is Neurodiversity and Waiting Well. Professionals with experience in these areas will also be available to offer help and support.

The Centre, Oak Street, Oswestry, SY11 1LW

Monday 25 March 2024

9.30am - 12.30pm, and 2pm - 5pm.

**The Community Drop-in at Highley Library,
Severn Centre Bridgnorth Road, WV16 6JG**

Friday 22nd March 9.30am - 11.30am

**Sunflower House, Kendal Road,
Shrewsbury, SY1 4ES**

Monday 15 April 2024

9.30am - 12.30pm, and 2pm - 5pm.

**St Peter's Primary school, Shrubbery
Gardens, Wem, SY4 5BX**

Monday 22 April 2024, 11.30am - 2,30pm

Support Groups for Kinship Carers

We know that for many kinship carers coming to a support group is one of the few times they can **let their guard down and be vulnerable in front of others**. For some it's a moment to have a cuppa, a biscuit and just get things off their chest, and for others it's an opportunity to be able to listen to other kinship carers and learn from their experiences.

If you're seeking some comfort and reassurance, our amazing support group leaders like Katie, an aunt kinship carer, are here to welcome you when you're ready to join. If you feel like all you've ever encountered as a kinship carer is brick walls, please know there is a supportive community in each of our in-person and online support groups who can help you navigate the complex challenges of being a kinship carer.

“Supporting other kinship carers is something I'm so passionate about. I would encourage other kinship carers to come along to a support group because this is a safe space and there are people here just like you. So many kinship carers have told me how glad they are that they came. Letting it all out with others like you can really make a difference.” - Katie

[Join an in-person support group](#)

[Join an online regional support group](#)

[Join an online special interest group](#)

Also coming up – more online information workshops

In addition to our support groups, you can join one of our free workshops, which are run by specialists on topics kinship carers have told us are useful to learn more about. Here's what we have coming up in March:

Monday 4 March 11am: Preparing for sensitive conversations with kinship children

Tuesday 5 March 10:30am: Introduction to kinship care

Monday 11 March 11am: Understanding trauma and attachment in children

Tuesday 12 March 10am: Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF)

Wednesday 13 March 7pm: Building resilience and wellbeing in your kinship family

Friday 15 March 9:30am: How to improve challenging behaviour

Tuesday 19 March 8pm: Better communication and the teenage years

Wednesday 20 March 1:30pm: Managing contact for kinship families – the emotional journey

Thursday 21 March 11am: What financial help am I entitled to as a kinship carer?

Friday 22 March 10am: Managing contact for kinship families – practical tools and tips

Monday 25 March 11:30am: Overview of the EHCP and SEND process

Important: Before you register for a workshop, **you need to sign up for a free Zoom account using the email you'll join the workshop on.** Without a Zoom account, you won't be able to register for the workshop. If you have any questions, you can contact us at [**workshops@kinship.org.uk**](mailto:workshops@kinship.org.uk)

If you'd like to see a workshop on a topic which isn't here, we'd really appreciate your feedback by emailing us at [comms@kinship.org.uk**](mailto:comms@kinship.org.uk).** We're learning a lot and your needs are at the heart of everything. So please get in touch to let us know how we can support you.

Are you a kinship carer?

A kinship carer is someone who is raising the child of a relative or friend.

Come along to our group for kinship carers



A chance to meet, listen, share and support one another.

Shrewsbury Kinship Carers

10.30am-12pm

First Friday of the month

Term time only

18+

The Lantern, Meadow Farm Drive, Shrewsbury, SY1 4NG

Free parking

Reception will direct you to the room, please say you're there for a **Kinship** group.

Please contact Lisa on the details below for more information.

Email: lisa.webley@kinship.org.uk

Telephone: 07355 035996

All kinship carers and special guardians are welcome



Part of the Kinship Group Network

Bringing kinship carers together



compass.kinship.org.uk
kinship.org.uk

Kinship is the working name for Grandparents Plus, which is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales under number 4454103 and registered as a charity under number 1093975

Emotional Coaching Free Training

Please see the attachment for details of FREE training on emotional coaching – what it is and how you can use this to support the children and young people in your care. We have been advised this is targeted at special guardians where a child was previously looked after, however if you care for a child who was not looked after, and you wish to attend, please contact the SGO Support Team.

We hope you have found some of this information useful. Don't Forget you can always view our web page on the Shropshire Council website for more information about Special Guardianship post order support and to access links to independent charities which support Kinship Carers.

Support services for special guardians | Shropshire Council