



## *Special Guardians' December 2024 Newsletter*

*Hi Everyone*

*Well, the big day is almost here, and we thought it may be of help to send out a newsletter with information for the festive period.*

*NEWS - In January, we will be welcoming a new member of the SGO Support Team. We are delighted to say that Louise Bowen will be job sharing with Jane. Louise has experience in different aspects of children's social work, as well as education and family support.....we are very excited.*

### *SGO Support Team Office Hours over Christmas and New Year*

*Christmas Eve – 9am – 5pm*

*Christmas Day – closed*

*Boxing Day – closed*

*December 27<sup>th</sup> – closed (due to annual leave)*

*December 30<sup>th</sup> – closed (due to annual leave)*

*December 31<sup>st</sup> – 9am – 5pm*

*January 1<sup>st</sup> – closed*

*January 2<sup>nd</sup> onwards – we return to our normal opening times:*

*9am – 5pm Monday – Thursday and 9am – 4pm Fridays.*

*If you have concerns for the welfare of a child, please call First Point of Contact on 03456789021 or (out of hours) Emergency Social Work Team on 03456789040.*



*We hope that 2024 has been kind to you and that 2025 will prove to be a happy and healthy one for us all.*

*Wishing you a Happy Christmas*

*Amy and Jane*

### *In this Newsletter:*

- Christmas lights Switch On – Bridgnorth and Lawley Square still to happen!
- Christmas Tractor runs
- Family Information Service link
- Meet Father Christmas
- Things to do in the holidays
- Shropshire Holiday Activities and Food (HAF)
- Get creative
- Support at Christmas – are you arguing too much?
- Finances at Christmas
- Parenting Help line
- Family Drop-Ins
- Stay and Play
- Solihull – well being for school parents (or Special Guardians)
- Kinship



## Christmas Lights Switch-ons

### Switch onto Christmas

Get yourself into the festive mood by going to your local Christmas lights switch on. Lots of towns are going all out this year with live music and performances, fairs, parades and visits from Father Christmas. We've put together a list of all the events we know about.

[Find out more](#)



## Christmas Tractor Runs

### Festive farmers

If you have a child who is tractor mad then you won't want to miss the chance to see a procession of tractors, decorated in Christmas lights, trundling down a road near you. It is a magical sight to behold! You can find a list of tractor runs on our Family Information Directory

[Find out more](#)



Welcome to the Christmas edition of the Family Info Service newsletter. It's full of ideas to make the most of the festive season!

Remember, we cover everything and anything to do with family life, so if you have a question, chances are we'll be able to help, or if we can't, we'll point you in the direction of someone who can. Find us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) or [X](#). Call 01743 254400 or email [ShropshireFIS@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:ShropshireFIS@shropshire.gov.uk)



### **Santa spotting**

Although Father Christmas is a very busy man, he still tries to get out and meet as many children as possible in the run up to Christmas. You might see him at a museum or castle, Christmas fair or on tour riding his sleigh. You may even get to have breakfast with him. Our Family Information Directory has a list of places we know he will be visiting.

[Find out more](#)



## **Festive fun**

There are lots of things going on in the run up to, and throughout, the Christmas holidays, including:

- Free board games days at Shrewsbury and Oswestry libraries
- A Christmas Family Fun Day at Wrekin Forest School
- The Owl Who Came for Christmas at the Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury
- A Festive Christmas Tree Trail at Comer Woods, Bridgnorth

and loads more. We're adding new events all the time, so keep checking back!

[Find out more](#)



## **Shropshire Holiday Activities and Food programme**

Shropshire HAF (Holiday Activities and Food) managed by Shropshire Council is an exciting programme of holiday activities for eligible children and young people.

Over the Christmas holidays, schools, voluntary and community organisations and childcare providers will be 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.

Children who are eligible for Shropshire HAF should receive an email from their school in the next weeks, with a booking code and details of the club on offer. You can find out more about the Shropshire HAF programme on the HAF website.

[Find out more](#)



## Cool competitions

We've spotted two fun competitions for children to enter.

### Design a front cover for the Hive competition

The Hive in Shrewsbury are looking for a budding artist to design the cover of their Spring 2025 What's On Guide. They are accepting submissions from children 5-11 years old, based around the theme of 'New Beginnings'. If your child would like to enter please do so by **Friday 6 December 2024**. Either email your design to [vicki@hiveonline.org.uk](mailto:vicki@hiveonline.org.uk) or drop off your drawing at The Hive's Front Desk (5 Belmont, Shrewsbury, SY1 1TE)

### Four seasons calendar competition

Severn Valley Country Park are asking visitors to enter photographs they have taken of the park from 1st June 2024 to 31st May 2025. They will be selecting 3 photographs from each season to go into a Severn Valley Country Park Calendar for 2026. All monies made from the sales of the calendar will support projects at the park.

Each season visitors will be able to submit 2 photographs ([Click here for the entry form and full details.](#)) If you are having trouble with the link, please email [svcpcalendarcomp@gmail.com](mailto:svcpcalendarcomp@gmail.com) or call into the visitor centre for a copy.

The competition has categories for under 10 year olds, Under 16 year olds and adults. Dates for submissions are:

- Spring: 1st March 2025-31st May 2025

Photographers whose photograph/s are selected for the calendar will receive a copy of the calendar.

## Support at Christmas time and throughout the year



### **Arguing too much?**

Worried about your relationship or feel you're arguing too much? Not all arguing between parents is harmful but when it's intense or happens a lot of the time, there can be a negative impact on the children.

[We can find ways to argue 'better', resolve disputes and reduce the conflict at home.](#)

We all want what's best for our children. Getting on better with your co-parent or partner improves outcomes for your children. It also improves your wellbeing – two very good reasons to seek help if your relationship is going through a difficult phase.

**Find out more**



### **Budgeting for Christmas**

We know Christmas can be a really expensive time of year so here are our top tips for keeping the costs down.

- Are you receiving everything you are entitled to? Turn2Us is a charity who believes everyone in the UK should have financial security so they can thrive. They offer a free benefits calculator and grants search on their website. It only takes a few minutes to check if you are missing out on something you could be entitled to. <https://www.turn2us.org.uk/>
- Credit unions are not-for-profit organisations that provide savings, loans and a range of services to their members. There are two Credit Unions in Shropshire, Fair Share Credit Union <https://www.fairshare.uk.com/fairshare-500-christmas-loan/> and Just

Credit Union <https://justcreditunion.org/loans/saver-loans/> Both offer Christmas loans to help you pay for this year and save towards next Christmas.

- You can get support with housing, energy and food costs through [Shropshire Council's Cost of Living website](#). You can be referred to the foodbank by a professional who knows you, such as your housing association, GP, support worker or school. [They can also refer you for a Christmas Food and Gift Hamper](#) and schemes such as [Santa's Little Stars](#) who provide wrapped age-appropriate Christmas presents to children all over the county
- [Our Family Information Directory](#) has lots of free or low cost activities and events to make Christmas fun.

## Parenting Help and Support Line

The Parenting Help and Support Line is here for parents with a listening ear and practical advice on everything from behaviours challenge to sleep issues. No judgment, just support, through this and confidential service. Call 01743 250950 Monday - Thursday, 4.30pm or Friday, 9.30am - 3.30pm or email: [parenting.team@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:parenting.team@shropshire.gov.uk)



friendly  
that  
anonymous  
9.30am -

## Family Drop Ins

It's fair to say that all parents from time to time need some help and support with issues that impact on family life. There is help and support available in Shropshire through our Early Help family drop ins – many of which are also stay and play sessions.

You can get free Information, advice and support on all aspects of family life, at our Family Drop-Ins. You can chat, have a cuppa and see how we can help you with:

- Family life
- Parenting support
- Domestic abuse support
- Money worries
- Housing support
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- and much more

To find your local drop in please visit the [Family Information Directory](#)

There is a new stay and play session happening at the Bridgnorth family drop in.



### Latest Family Information Service newsletter

The latest edition of the Family Information Service (FIS) newsletter is now available on the news section of the [Early help website](#).

The newsletter is just another way in which the FIS give parents the info and resources they need to help family life run a little smoother

Please encourage any families you are working with to sign up – and don't forget to sign up yourself! [Sign up to the Family Information Service newsletter](#) or scan the QR code



### Solihull Approach – Newsletter for parents

The Solihull Approach never stands still and is such an innovative team.

They have created a newsletter for parents/carers with school age children.

You can view the newsletter here [Wellbeing for school parents – new online resources](#)





## Kinship Care

More than 141,000 children are in kinship care in England and Wales.

[Kinship](#) are the leading charity in England and Wales for all types of kinship carers regardless of whether there is a care order in place, so they support family carers of children looked after or under an informal care arrangement, private fostering, child arrangements order/residence order, Special Guardianship Order (SGO), etc. They offer free advice and support but they have government funding to roll out FREE training nationally. Search their training offer [here](#).



Written and recorded by kinship carers, [this film](#) speaks to the joy, the warmth, the humour, the love, as well as the challenges of being a kinship family.

