



Save our Sanity

SI:MK founded in 2015
with support from MK
Community Foundation



31 March 2025

MK Soroptimists

Newsletter 65

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Editorial Welcome

Are we ready to rock and roll in 2025 to celebrate our 10th Charter Anniversary?



2025 is going to be a busy year for us. No change there I hear you say. But it is a special year too because we are celebrating our 10th Charter Anniversary in 2025. It doesn't seem possible but our Milton Keynes club is 10 years old this year. We could not do what we do without our friends and so we would like

to invite our friends and supporters to join us at our celebration dinner being held at the Moore Place Hotel at Aspley Guise on Saturday 28th June 2025 starting at 7.00 pm. The evening will be a three-course meal at £37 per head. We hope you can join us. To book a place and choice of menu, email Sue at soroptimistsmk@gmail.com. We really hope you can join us; it will be a lovely evening.

January started in a wonderful way but also a sad way. Angie, our first President and one of our founding members has found herself a new job and is moving down to Cornwall.



How do we congratulate her and say goodbye. Well, ever resourceful, we thought we would do something a little different. A surprise celebration dinner was arranged, members and friends from other clubs came and with our own Eamon Andrews, aka Lynne, we presented Angie with "This is your Soroptimist life". A look back to 2015 when Angie was one of the founding members presented to HRH Princess Anne at our first SIGBI Conference and through all the fun times since, which always seemed to have a drink or two involved. The evening was full of great laughs and a fabulous time was had by all. Angie, you have been a truly inspiring Chair and member of our club and we all wish you all the very best in your new home and new job down in Cornwall. We will miss you but you will always be a part of our club.



January is Cervical Cancer Month and one way SIGBI support this is with a social information media campaign. For the last two years SIGBI have been working, across the Federations worldwide, to raise awareness of the ways we can bring cervical cancer to an end.

Soroptimists work to five charitable objects and health is a critical one. We know that women's health issues are not prioritised sufficiently and ill health can disproportionately affect women because it impacts on their caring roles, their reproductive health and of course impacts on their ability to take their place in the workforce. **Click here** to read the SIGBI article.



January is also the month each year we start off by giving the charities we support a monetary donation.

But it is also about having a catch up and hearing about all they have achieved in the year and their programme of action for the forthcoming year. The latter is especially helpful for our planning day in

February when we agree our plan of action for the year. It was lovely to hear from them and for them to share with each other and help each other too. It is a privilege to work with these charities and we love doing it too. It was lovely to hear back from Ukraine Appeal a few weeks later thanking us for the donation which they had already spent by buying educational books for the children at the summer school.



Great News, MK Act's Friendly Foodies project was voted in first place in the Tesco Stronger Starts Scheme, which means they will receive the full £1,470 support for Friendly Foodies.

Friendly Foodies is our initiative with MK Act to help the women at the women's refuge and will be centred around the joy of learning new cookery skills, enhancing nutrition and health, reducing food waste and fostering a sense of community for survivors of abuse. Importantly, the sessions will be designed and supported by volunteers from us. MK Act have now purchased the equipment. Members and friends, if you have any recipes to suggest please let us know. We are hoping once we have sorted out our DBS checks and food hygiene checks that we can start up in May.



January ended with further celebrations. Firstly, we are back into our season of Orange Cafes and we thank Dobbies in Bletchley for kindly letting us continue to set up our stall each month. If you are able to come along and help staff the stall, please let me know.

On the 29 Jan at our monthly Friendship lunch, it was lovely to be able to celebrate with Barbara her birthday and present her with a bunch of flowers. As we said celebrations will be happening throughout the year.



Feb 15 and our planning day, an important meeting in our calendar, because our planning day gives us the opportunity to look back over the past year, reflect on what went well, what we could have done better, look at the suggestions our charities have put to us and come up with a plan for the year.

And we certainly have an exciting programme of work with a full breadth of activities from developing for boys a Healthy relationships training pilot to take into schools, tree planting to celebrate our 10th anniversary, our Friendly foodies project with MK Act, our Violet Awards 2025 through to our 100 challenges. Just a small sample of what we are hoping to achieve and which was approved at our February meeting, alongside us modelling some beautifully hand made winter caps that were later donated to our charities. Soroptimist's always up for a challenge and it was lovely to welcome two new hopeful members in Debbie and Mary.



On the 19 Feb a number of us were fortunate to meet MP for Buckinghamshire and Bletchley, Callum Anderson.

We discussed how we could work together to reduce violence against women and girls and listened to what the government are doing to reach their goal of halving violence against women and girls within a decade. We presented the Soroptimists report on Special Domestic Violence Courts and also raised a few local issues which he has taken away and has confirmed he will get back to us on. We look forward to working with Callum.



2025 marks 3 years since war broke out in the Ukraine.

The Ukraine Appeal held a very moving service "Heartbroken but not broken" at the Christ the Cornerstone Church 25 Feb which members attended.

Viktoryia Shtanko, one of the founders of Ukraine Appeal was very active on media over that week bringing to the spotlight concerns Ukrainians are facing. Viktoryia was interviewed by the BBC and spoke about her devastation at seeing footage of her hometown, Okhtyrka in Ukraine coming under attack and how she feared for her family at

any minute. To hear the full interview on the BBC News [click here \(BBC News Media Image\)](#). Another article appearing on BBC news that week had Viktoryia highlighting the continuing temporary UK visas that are worrying Ukrainian refugees. [Click here](#) to read this article. And if that was not enough Viktoryia and a colleague were in the audience of Question time that week which was devoted to the Ukraine war.



We could not see out February without another celebration as part of our 10th anniversary and had a lovely meal at the Birch, Woburn Sands. With a final celebration outside lighting the cake.

As I said earlier, this is a year for celebrations and we mean to do that.

March is an important month for all Soroptimists. Firstly, 2025 is an important year as it marks the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration, made in 1995 by world leaders who promised equal rights, opportunities, power and safety for women and girls everywhere.

The 1995 **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action** enshrines that promise. It is still the world's most comprehensive, visionary plan ever created, spanning 12 areas of focus, to achieve equal rights of ALL women and girls. And since 1996 the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) became the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality, the rights and the empowerment of women. It takes a leading role in monitoring and reviewing progress and problems in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration. It meets for two weeks every year in March – the biggest women's congress - to discuss progress, gaps, emerging issues and new actions required which are reported to the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Since 1984 Soroptimist International became one of the official organisations awarded consultative status by ECOSOC. SIGBI were awarded consultative status in 2013 – as one of the five Federations of the wider SI – and this is how we play a crucial role in ensuring member states remain accountable, driving action and improvements for women's equality. To learn more of what was discussed at CSW69 [view here](#) the SI blogs/News.

March is also International Women's Day (IWD) - 8 March. The United Nation's theme for 2025 was "For all women and girls: Rights, Equality, Empowerment". This year's theme calls for action that can unlock equal rights, power and opportunities for all and a feminist future where no one is left behind. Central to this vision is empowering the next generation—youth, particularly young women and adolescent girls—as catalysts for lasting change.



For 2025 we held our 5th IWD Afternoon Tea event on Wed 5 March. This year's event was to raise funds for our new pilot project "Healthy Relationships". The programme is a preventative initiative aimed at engaging with young boys aged between 12-17 to give them the tools to foster healthy relationships. The pilot will be working in partnership with MK Act with the eventual plan for MK Act to take this out to as many schools in MK as possible.

This year's Afternoon Tea was held at the Wavendon Community Hub Center near the Stables and a very big thank you everyone who came along to support us. We were very fortunate to have three speakers. Mayor Marie Bradburn who spoke about being a woman cycling on the redways of MK. Our next speaker was Sue Burke, CEO of MK Act, Women's Refuge, speaking about the many strands of their domestic abuse service to support the community. And MP Emily Darlington kindly spoke via video to update us on the work of the government to reduce violence against women and to support our project initiative.

A great afternoon of sandwiches, tea, homemade scones and cakes was enjoyed and thank you everyone for helping us to raise nearly £850 towards our pilot initiative. Our Afternoon Tea event has become one of our main important fundraising events in our annual calendar but it couldn't happen without all the hard work of our members and to our friends who support us. Thank you so much.



March is also the month to say a very Happy birthday to our treasurer Jean. And we held an interesting branch meeting this month. Sexual Assault and Abuse Support service for Bucks and MK (SASSBMK) came and spoke at our meeting.

The primary purpose of this service is to work with and support women and girls who have been victims of sexual assault. The figures are frightening:

1 in 4 women

1 in 6 children

Estimate only 15% of survivors will report to the Police

86% of rapes against women are carried out by someone they know

It was an emotional, interesting and sad discussion when you hear of the continuing increase in need for this service. But it was good to make this connection and we are hoping now to work with their "Thrive" group to create bunting for this year's Annual Vigil event.



On the 18 March Scottie, Jean, Vanessa and myself popped into MK Snap.

At last years MK Snap craft fayre Steve had seen one of Scotties crocheted animals and thought it was fantastic. But when he came back it had been

purchased. Scottie thought she would make a Blue Dragon to represent MK Snap's Blu and presented it to Steve for the benefit and use of staff and learners. We received a lovely thank you message – "We're thrilled to share that the Soroptimists have kindly made Blu our official mascot! 💙🐾 This marks our fantastic partnership, and we're excited to work together in the future to support our shared causes. A huge thank you to the Soroptimists for their generosity, we can't wait to see what we can achieve together."



As I have consistently said this is the year for celebrations and it was lovely to attend YMCA's community lunch. This monthly lunch was a very special one because it marked YMCA's 5th birthday at being in their new fabulous facilities.

Can't believe it's that long ago that we held a sewathon which raised over £2,600 to sponsor a room we named "Violet" after Soroptimist founder Violet Richardson-Ward. We also handmade 30 quilts for each of the stage 1

supported living rooms and a learner at MK Snap painted a beautiful painting in Violet to hang in our sponsored room. As you can see it was another day of cakes and celebration. And its good to see how YMCA is now growing and working out in not only the MK community but in Northampton as well.



March ended with our Orange Café at Dobbies and then all round to Barbara's for a crafting afternoon.

Half of us were making boxes with little surprises in to be a table placement at our 10th Anniversary dinner on 28 June. And the rest of us were starting on our Orange the World bunting we are making to support the Annual Vigil event taking

place on 25 November, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and girls. Last year we made 90 Orange hearts which were given out at the MK Gallery event. This year our hope is to help make bunting

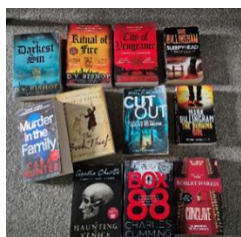
with Orange the World messages and messages of support to surround MK Rose. Community Action borrowed our Orange the World stall and held an event at the shopping center on 8 March and had a number of people come up and make bunting messages. Hopefully, if we can make a number of strands, we may be able to get them displayed in the local libraries as well. Watch this space..

But this first quarter of the year has not all been about events. We have got off to a great start with donations to our charities. Firstly a very big thanks to Sally and her team at Womens Institute Horwood. They have made very generous donations so far this year and we have been able to distribute 5 big sacks of clothes to Works For Us and Unity MK on their behalf and we know both charities are very grateful.

So far this year we have:

- Provided 115 books for UnityMK library – our first 100 challenge completed.
- In January 2 sacks each of clothing from WI Horwood dropped off to Works For Us and Unity MK and the latter also received a tin of sweets and 2 boxes of chocolates.
- At our January meeting each charity received a £100 donation, the first of the year.
- 3 February saw 2 bags of toiletries each taken to MK Act, YMCA and Works For Us. 2 Dresses delivered to Works For Us and a sack of clothes delivered to Unity MK.
- 13 Feb another sack of clothes from WI Horwood delivered to UnityMK.
- 13 March 3 heavy duty clothes rails purchased for Works For Us to support their back to work wardrobe
- 17 March and we completed a couple more of our 100 challenges:
 - 400grams of used or new stamps were collected. 200 grams were donated to Against Breast Cancer Charity and 200 grams were donated to the Macmillan Cancer Charity.
 - 250 grams of Medical Blister packs were recycled at Superdrug fulfilling part of our Green Pledge.
- 17 March both Unity MK and Works For Us received another clothes donation each.
- 18 March we donated Blu Dragon to MK Snap to help both staff and learners.
- 20 March and clothes donations dropped off at Unity MK and YMCA.
- 22 March a hand blender, measuring jug, kitchen timer were donated to MK Act for the Foodie project alongside 2 lamps.

Watch this space to find out about what is going to be the next 100 challenge,



We have received a kind thank you from Works For Us for their new clothes rails.



We are incredibly grateful to MK Soroptimists for their generous support in purchasing much-needed rails for our wardrobe. As one of the charities they support, we truly appreciate their kindness and commitment to empowering women.

These rails have made a huge difference in helping us organise our wardrobe, ensuring we can offer professional workwear to women preparing for interviews and starting new jobs. Thanks to this support, we can help create capsule wardrobes for their first week, giving them confidence as they take the next step in their careers. Thank you, MK Soroptimists, for making a real impact!

There have been some updates so please check you have all the following dates in your diaries.

Branch meetings – Tuesday - 5.30pm Community Room (back of café),	Friendship Lunch Wednesday, 12.30pm	Orange Café – Dobbies 10am to 1pm
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Morrisons, 4 Barnsdale Drive, Westcroft, MK4 4DD	The Inn in the Lake, Mount Farm Bletchley	
15 April 27 May – AGM (Date Change) 17 June 15 July 19 August – Summer Party 16 September 21 October 18 November	30 April 28 May 25 June 30 July 27 August 24 September 29 October 26 November	22 April 27 May 24 June 22 July 26 August 23 September 28 October 25 November
Events		
<p>June – SILC Regional Conference, 10am to 4pm, ~Redbourne near St Albans Saturday 28 June – 7pm Moore Place Hotel 10th Charter Anniversary Dinner 12 July – SIGBI – Day of Action Aug – Fish and Chip Quiz evening at Simpson Date TBC 18 October – SILC Regional Conference/AGM Lancaster Hall London Fri 31 Oct – Sund 2 Nov SIGBI Annual Conference Birmingham 11 Nov Remembrance Day MK Rose 25 Nov – 10 Dec 16 Days of Activism Tuesday 25 Nov Annual Vigil MK Rose and MK Gallery Sat 6 Dec Hearts and Music Concert Venue TBC Sat 13 Dec – SILC Regional Conference/Celebration of Human Rights Day – Zoom 10am to 1pm</p>		

Further dates will be added during the year so please keep an eye on our diary.



Wishing you all the very best Angie in your new job and your new home

Happy reading everyone. Thank you, members and friends, for all you do and all your support. Wishing you all a very Happy Easter.

Soroptimists standing up for Women and Girls
Sue Key, Chair

Statue plans to honour Open University founder



A statue to honour the late politician Jennie Lee has been proposed to celebrate her role in establishing the Open University (OU).

Milton Keynes City Council is inviting artists to submit ideas for the statue, which would be installed in the city centre. Baroness Lee of Asheridge was part of a group that created a white paper recommending the university's creation. Prof Josie Fraser, interim vice-chancellor of the OU, said "Jennie Lee's passion for making quality education possible for all, regardless of background, was foundational

in the creation and mission of the OU. [Click here](#) to read full BBC News article (PA Media Image)

Time limit for child sex abuse claims to be removed



A three-year time limit for child sexual abuse victims to sue for damages will be removed in England and Wales under "long overdue" government reforms, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has said.

Laws would also be refined to encourage employers to apologise for the actions of current or former employees, so victims would be more likely to receive apologies from institutions like schools, care facilities or hospitals. To read the full article on BBC News [click here](#) (Getty Media Image)

"Epidemic" of violence against women and girls in UK is getting worse - report



National Audit Office says government attempts to tackle misogynistic violence hampered by poor co-ordination.

An "epidemic of violence against women and girls" in the UK is getting worse despite years of government promises and strategies, a highly critical report from Whitehall's spending watchdog has said. The watchdog found "disjointed" efforts meant VAWG was a "significant and growing problem" affecting one in 12 women in England and

Wales and causing physical, mental, social and financial harm to survivors. To read the full Guardian News article [click here](#) (Wiktor Szymanowicz/Future Publishing/Getty Media Image)

"The pain was intense": Why UK women are paying for private gynaecological care



NHS delays for hysterectomies and endometriosis treatment are forcing women to pay for private healthcare.

Women in Britain are paying up to £11,154 for a hysterectomy in private hospitals due to delays to NHS gynaecological care, according to research by the Royal College of Obstetricians. The Guardian has spoken to three women regarding their experiences of

paying privately for gynecological treatment. To read the full Guardian News article [click here](#) (Phawit Soprdit/Alamy Media Image)

Works for Us - Next steps to Digital training available



The world of online is constantly changing and it is hard to keep up no matter your age. Works for us have a number of courses to help you with the digital world whether you are trying to get a job and now have to learn how to deal with employers using AI in the employment process to getting skills to keep you up to date with using your computer and the web. To find out more go to their Facebook page, [click here](#).

Future Miss Quiz Dates

Future Miss Quiz Events: Sat 5 April - Sat 10 May - Sat 24 May -	IPeace Quiz in Simpson Hall Concert in Simpson Church 7.00pm Bring and share food Quiz for Willen Hospice and Tribute to Shirley, Simpson Church
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MK MP calls for all Domestic Abuse victims to get 10 days of paid “safe leave” from work



Emily Darlington, MK City MP has co-sponsored a new bill to give victims of domestic abuse the right to take 10 days of paid “safe leave”.

The bill, if it becomes law, will help the estimated 2.1 million people in the UK that are living with abuse. The bill, already at its second reading, would give victims and survivors of domestic abuse ten days off work on full pay to deal with issues such as getting to a place of safety, arranging childcare and attending court hearing or police interviews. To read the full MK Citizen News article [click here](#) (MK Citizen Image)

MK Foodbank temporarily moving premises



Important Update: MK Food Bank is Moving Temporarily!

They are relocating to a temporary base and will continue to serve the community during this time, food parcels will be distributed to all their serving centres.

Starting from 3rd March drop off donations at their new temporary location at:

👉 M&M Supplies PLC, First Avenue, Denbigh West Industrial Estate, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK1 1DX

Donation hours are Monday to Friday, between 9 – 16.30pm

For any questions, please contact us at 01908 322800 or office@mkfoodbank.org.uk

“A man exposed himself to me on a video call - police didn’t properly investigate”



Last October, business Coach Rebecca Amin opened her laptop to join a video call as her children played in the room next door. When her male client turned on his camera Rebecca was shocked to find he was standing naked from the waist down. [Read her story](#) and a report highlighting failures by two police forces when dealing with reports of malicious sexualized phone calls. (BBC article and photo by BBC)

School’s video hopes to combat toxic masculinity



A video encouraging men and boys to be open with their emotions has been created by students and staff at a school. The film made at Clevedon School in North Somerset, warns against toxic masculinity in society, a term that refers to a set of behaviours and attitudes that can be damaging to mental health. “From a young age, boys are taught that to cry is weakness; to be vulnerable is shameful; to express their emotions other than anger is to lose their masculinity,” staff say in the video. The video was conceived by PE teacher Elliot Nightingale. To read the full BBC News article [click here](#) (BBC News Image)

The year China’s famous road-tripping “auntie” found freedom



Sixty-year-old Chinese grandmother Su Min had no intention of becoming a feminist icon. She was only trying to escape her abusive husband when she hit the road in 2020 in her white Volkswagen hatchback with a rooftop tent and her pension. Over the next four years and 180,000 miles, the video diaries she shared of her adventures, while detailing decades of pain, earned her millions of cheerleaders online. They called her the “road-tripping auntie” as she inadvertently turned into a hero for women who felt trapped in their own lives. To read the full BBC News article [click here](#) (Su Min News Image)

MK Fawcett – Latest Blog



Read MK Fawcett’s latest Blog news which includes Nourishing our mind and the Darkling Plain blogs – [Click here](#) to read the March blog

SIGBI latest News/blogs



[Click here](#) to read all the latest news articles and blogs. Includes:

- Soroptimists take the fight for Women’s Rights to the World stage this International Women’s Day
- New Club for SIGBI – SI Spen Valley, Yorkshire
- Empowering Women through Lifelong Learning
- Soroptimists celebrate £320,000 worth of Diamond Education Grants this UN Day of Education



The February Global Voice is out and includes articles on the following:

- Looking forward to CSW69
- On the road to CSW69 webinar recording
- Our Voice at the UN
- New Soroptimist International Foundation Projects

Soroptimist International News and Blogs - read the latest

[Click here](#) to see all the Soroptimist International blogs, including:

- Towards Zero Waste in Fashion on the International Day of Zero Waste
- Effective Policies to ensure Equality for all Women and Girls: The Importance of Institutional Mechanism
- Addressing Gender Based Violence at CSW69
- Digital Gender Violence: Towards Transformative Policies and Partnerships in the Beijing+30 Framework – Panel 2

- Digital Gender Violence: Towards Transformative Policies and Partnerships in the Beijing+30 Framework – Panel 1
- The I Count! Coalition: Shaping Data Futures that centre Individuals
- Leveraging AI to Bridge the Gender Gap in Technology
- How re Digital Rights for Women and Marginalised groups going?
- Changing face of Violence Against Women



Read the latest Soroptimist International News articles including, [click here](#):

- Recruiting for SI Representative to the UN, Vienna
- CSW60 Closing Ceremony
- CSW69 Opening Ceremony: A renewed call for Gender Equality and Action
- SI and Congo's Joint Statement on AI and its impact on Women and Girls
- Upcoming event: Hazardous Drug consumption in advanced age: The crux of Polypharmacy

Our Twitter feed and web page - don't forget to have a look



**Click here to see
our Milton Keynes Soroptimists
Twitter feed
and what we are currently
talking about**



**Click here to see
our Milton Keynes
Soroptimists web page
and what we are currently
talking about**

**Click here
to go Back
to the top**



Or scan our new QR code which will take you to our website with all our contact details, diary/event dates.

SI:MK support these local charities:

