Newsletter

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

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Editorial Welcome



Soroptimists standing up for Women and Girls

Happy Easter and a Wonderful Start to 2026

May I begin by wishing everyone a very Happy Easter. I hope you all enjoy a lovely break, whether that is spent with family, on a day trip, or simply taking time to relax.

It hardly seems possible that we are already a quarter of the way through 2026. As we pause to reflect on the first three months of the year, it is wonderful to see just how much we have already achieved in supporting others across our community.

A Busy and Positive January

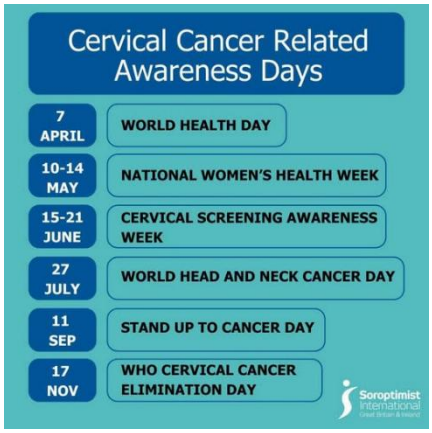
We began the year by supporting Miss Quiz, whose fundraising efforts continue to make a remarkable difference both locally and nationally. Last year alone, Miss Quiz raised more than £18,500 for charity, and we were delighted to take part once again in January. The event was held to raise funds for a new speaker and microphone so that the quizzes can continue. Our team—Jean, Laraine, Barbara, Scottie, Brian and myself—enjoyed a fantastic evening of quizzing, fish and chips, and plenty of laughter. Each table was invited to nominate a charity to receive the remaining proceeds after the equipment had been purchased. We nominated MK Act and our Healthy Relationships Project, and were thrilled when our table won £242. A lovely evening and a wonderful result. And we look forward to the quiz Miss Quiz is running for us on Saturday 1 August. Always great fun and if you want to join in make a note in your diary.











January is also **Cervical Cancer Awareness Month**, and we continued to raise awareness through our Facebook page and our monthly Orange Café stall at Dobbies.
Over the past year the stall has grown significantly and now focuses on three key themes:

- the UN Orange the World campaign to end violence against women and girls
- Women's Health Matters, including cervical cancer awareness and the SIGBI health cards
- raising awareness of Soroptimist work and projects

We are delighted to be expanding our Women's Health Matters resources with new ovarian cancer graphics kindly provided by Fay, Macmillan Wellbeing Nurse Specialist and Professional Nurse Advocate at Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS.
We will also be introducing the new SIGBI women's safety social media campaign, launching in May. Each month will highlight an important issue, including anti-stalking, harassment, street safety, and the Hollie Guard app. If you follow us on Facebook, please do look out for these posts and share them so we can spread these vital messages even further.

January is also our annual opportunity to meet in person with our linked charities. It was lovely to hear about their work over the past year and to explore new ways we can support them in 2026. We were pleased to begin the year by presenting each charity with a £100 donation.

The generosity of our supporters also continued to shine. Our thanks go to Dianne, who made 52 knitted bears, ducks and ninja turtles, all of which were given to Baby Basics for inclusion in Molly baskets for new mums.
Baby Basics also received a car load of toys, more than 50 baby grows, and beautifully knitted cardigans donated by Sally and her team. In addition, 43 children's books were donated to the Sunflower School run by the Ukraine Appeal.






February: Reflection, Planning and New Partnerships

February began with our important Planning Day, giving us the chance to reflect on the year behind us. We looked at what we did over the year and asked was it successful, aligned with our objectives the right thing to do and whether they were projects we enjoyed. It was inspiring to reflect on such a varied and successful year—from celebrating our 10th anniversary, attended by the President of Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland, to raising £400 in 50p donations for MK Act's new refuge, and creating a pillar decoration for the 16 Days of Activism campaign.

Following our review, we are excited to welcome two new charities into closer partnership this year:

- Baby Basics MK, a non-profit charity dedicated to supporting families living in Milton Keynes and the immediate surrounding area who are in financial hardship. To learn more **click here.**
- Sexual Abuse and Assault Support Services Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, a women-led charity supporting those affected by rape, sexual assault and abuse. To learn more **click here**.

Both charities align closely with our mission to support women and girls, and we are looking forward to working alongside them. While our partnerships with UnityMK and the Ukraine Appeal may be less formal this year, we remain committed to supporting them and make donations whenever possible.

A special thank you also goes to Laraine for donating one of her beautiful handmade quilts on planning day, which was auctioned at our March Afternoon Tea and raised £125. Our thanks also to the High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire for purchasing it and helping support our work.

February saw the continuation of our Foodies Refuge Lunch project at MK Act. Thanks to a successful Tesco Blue Token grant last January, we purchased cooking equipment that now enables us to run regular sessions with mums at the refuge. These sessions help improve cookery skills, build confidence, and show how to prepare nutritious meals economically. With up to six participants at each session, they continue to be a valuable and enjoyable project.

More donations were also distributed during February. One of our ongoing annual projects is collecting new and unused toiletries from donation stations and friends, then redistributing them to our charities. After around three months of collections, we were able to deliver substantial supplies to MK Act, YMCA and UnityMK.
Additional donations included:

- 105 books, clothing and rucksacks for UnityMK.
- bedding, duvet covers, sheets and towels for YMCA.
- 500g of used stamps, split and sent to Against Breast Cancer and Macmillan Cancer Support as part of our Women's Health Matters support.






March: A Month of Fundraising and Inspiration

March is always one of our busiest—and most rewarding—months. One of our biggest fundraising events of the year is our International Women's Day Afternoon Tea, held to mark 8 March. This year's UN theme for 2026 was "Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls." It is a powerful reminder that no country has yet fully closed the legal gap between men and women, and that action is still urgently needed to remove the barriers that continue to disadvantage women and girls worldwide. The UN reports that right now, women have only 64 per cent of the legal rights that men hold worldwide.

We were honoured to welcome the High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire, Pippa Kirkbride, the Deputy Lord Lieutenant Sarah Clarke JP, and our guest speakers from the Thames Valley Police Harm Reduction Unit, Rachel Wheaton and Jacqueline Baverstock. Their presentation on supporting victims of rape and serious sexual assault in our area was both powerful and sobering. Hearing about the realities of the justice process and the length of time cases can take to reach court was difficult, but it reinforced the importance of the work we are doing.

Despite the seriousness of the topic, the event itself was a wonderful afternoon held at MK Snap, who we thank for letting us use their beautiful facilities which provide the perfect setting. Members kindly baked cakes and scones, and thanks to everyone who attended and supported the event, we raised an incredible £1,000 towards our Healthy Relationships pilot project. Thank you to everyone who contributed, attended, baked, donated and helped make it such a memorable occasion.

We are very excited to report that we are now working in partnership with the Open University on our Healthy Relationships training programme for boys and young men. They are in the process of identifying a couple of Milton Keynes Secondary schools to deliver a pilot in autumn. Young people from those schools will be given the opportunity using a variety of IT tools to help build the course. The eventual aim will be to put the course on their Open Network which will then make it freely available to a much wider audience here and around the world.

And for those who enjoyed the afternoon tea and, or would like to join us next time — please make a note in your diaries for Wednesday 10 March 2027, our provisional date for next year's event.

We are immensely proud of everything achieved in just three months. Thank you to every member, supporter, charity partner and friend who helps make this work possible. Together, we are already making 2026 a year of real impact.

Before I sign off, two things to note please. There have been some updates, especially with regard to the Orange Café date, so please check you have all the following dates in your diaries.

Branch meetings – Tuesday - 5.30pm Community Room (back of café), Morrisons, 4 Barnsdale Drive, Westcroft, MK4 4DD	**Friendship Lunch Wednesday, 12.30pm The Inn in the Lake, Mount Farm Bletchley**	**Orange Café – Dobbies 10am to 1pm**
28 April 26 May AGM 23 June 21 July 25 August – Summer Party 15 September 20 October 17 November 15 December	29 April 27 May 24 June 29 July 26 August 30 September 28 October 25 November	28 April 26 May 30 June 28 July 25 August 29 September 27 October 24 November

Events

Sat 20 June – SILC Summer Regional Conference, to be Hosted by SI St Albans and District and SI High Wycombe

Sat 4 July – Hearts and Music Concert, Furzton Church Hall, Time TBC

July – SIGBI Day of Action TBC

Sat 1 Aug Fish and Chip Quiz 7.00pm at Simpson Church

25 Aug – Summer Party Venue and Time TBC

Sat 10 Oct – SILC SILC Region AGM/Conference, Lancaster Hall London

Fri 30 to Sat 31 Oct – SIGBI Annual Conference Cardiff

11 Nov Remembrance Day - MK Rose

25 Nov – 10 Dec 16 Days of Activism - **Tuesday 25 Nov Annual Vigil MK Rose and other venue TBC**

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

Regional Events and Annual Conference

Sat 20 Jun 2026 - SILC Region Summer Conference –
Venue - Wycombe Wanderers Football Stadium.
There will be lively and inspirational great speakers and plenty of opportunities for networking. Refreshments and lunch will be provided. For more details go to the website: https://sigbi.org/london-chilterns/jun2026. Booking information will be sent to Clubs soon.

Sat 10 Oct – SILC SILC Region AGM/Conference, Lancaster Hall London

Fri 30 to Sat 31 Oct – SIGBI Annual Conference Cardiff See box below for details

Sat 5 Dec – SILC Region Human Rights Day Celebration – Zoom 10am to 1pm

Fri 30 to Sat 31 Oct – SIGBI Annual Conference Cardiff See below

- **Hotels can be booked now and SIGBI will open bookings for the Conference in May.**
- **The programme details will be available soon.**
- **Please email silondonchilterns@hotmail.com if you are interested in attending so that we can co-ordinate arrangements as a Region and you can join the WhatsApp group to share information.**
- **We are recommending 2 hotels for our Region - the Holland House Hotel (where the conference is actually being held and includes a spa) or the Premier Inn Queen St (10 mins away). The best price for the Holland House Hotel is through the booking link on the Conference website https://sigbi.org/cardiff2026/delegate-accommodation/. This is the link for the Premier Inn https://www.premierinn.com/gb/en/hotels/wales/glamorgan/cardiff/cardiff-city-centre queen-street.html.**
- **The conference days are expected to be regular office hours Friday 30 Oct and Sat 31 Oct.**
- **Some people are booked into hotels from Thursday to Sunday but you may choose to travel early Friday morning and Saturday evening to save extra nights in the hotel.**
- **You can also just book to attend the conference for 1 day.**



Wishing you all
a Happy Easter and
Happy reading everyone.

Sue Key, Chair

March – Women's History Month



Every March Women's History Month raises awareness of the contributions women have made to events through history and society.

It seems only appropriate to observe this by celebrating Jennie Lee, who's statute is to be installed later this year in Station Square.

Jennie Lee played a role in founding the Open University and was also committed to arts, education and public service.

She was born in Fife in 1904 and was elected as an MP for North Lanark in 1929. Not only was she one of the first women to enter the House of Commons but at the age of 24 she was also the youngest MP at the time.
She lost her seat in 1931 but was re-elected in 1945 as a member for Cannock. And under Harold Wilson, she became the Minister for Arts in 1964. In 1965 she wrote a seminal White Paper "A policy of the Arts" which placed the arts at the centre of everyday life and helped shape the creation of a national cultural policy through the Arts Council.

In 1966 she produced the White Paper on “The University of the Air”, this paper laid out the foundation for the Open University which as launched two years later. She fought for a university that was open to all to provide inspiring experiences and to make a learning culture available to all. “In 1970 Jennie Lee took a Life Peerage and became Baroness Lee of Ashridge. To learn more about Jennie Lee, **click here**.

Milton Keynes Fawcett Group – Latest Blog



Read the latest blog from Milton Keynes Fawcett group. Always an interesting read and this month goes from wars to Music all on one page.

There is also a look at what the MK Fawcett group have been up to including their latest evidence paper, a compilation of data relating to Milton Keynes and their Safer, Healthier and Fairer manifesto, I urge you to read. **Click here** to read the full article.

Regional Conference celebrating International Women’s Day



On Saturday 14th March Soroptimist International London Chilterns Region celebrated International Women’s Day at the Lancaster Hall Hotel.
The theme for International Women’s Day 2026 is ‘Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls’.
Keynote speakers for the morning were – Barbara Jeremiah and Kay Linnell talking about “A Hobby That Got Out of Hand: our part in getting justice for the Sub Postmasters in the scandal of the Post Office fraud.”
After a break and chance to catch up with everyone over a lovely lunch, the next speaker was **Lidia Put,** a Ukrainian member of the Association of Ukraine in Great Britain (AUGB) in Luton.
Lidia’s talk was titled “Resilient by Choice: Ukrainian Women and the Power of Hope”. She spoke powerfully about the roles of women as part of the war effort in Ukraine and the horrors of living through a war.
And when it came to the Programme Action report updates, we gave an update on our International Women’s Day afternoon tea event, our Healthy Relationships training for boys and young men programme by men and how we are now working with the Open University who want to pilot it with 2/3 schools in Milton Keynes before it goes on the Open Network. And our 50p’s challenge got a mention too. To read the full article **click here.**

Faster access to breast cancer screenings with same day results launched in Milton Keynes



A Cancer clinic in Milton Keynes is now offering women, who are worried about a breast symptom. to be seen by a specialist within 24 hours.

The enhanced service at GenesisCare’s specialist outpatient cancer care centre aims to reduce the anxiety many women experience when they discover a lump or notice a change, by offering fast access to an assessment and clear answers. To read the full MK Citizen article **click here.** (Adobe stock Image)

Controlled: Can I Trust my Partner? - One to watch



One To Watch... Controlled: Can I Trust My Partner? - an insightful documentary in to partner abuse.

"Daisy Maskell investigates the shocking surge in partner abuse among under-30s, and enlists her boyfriend to help her expose the sinister 'stalkerware' apps used to spy on victims"
Watch now at https://www.channel4.com/.../controlled-can-i-trust-my...

Sexual Assault & Abuse Support Service Conference celebrating 30 years of service



Sexual Assault and Abuse Support Service Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes is celebrating 30 years of service with a conference showcasing the survivor's journey to empowerment and taking back control. It is taking place on Tuesday 28 April 9am to 1pm, at The Oculus, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury. Tickets are £30 per person.

Don't panic - five ways to stop your kids endless scrolling



If you're a parent, you may have felt somewhat validated by the recent United States court ruling that Meta and Google intentionally built addictive social media platforms that harmed the mental health of a young woman.

Lawyers for the woman, known as Kaley, argued that features of Instagram, such as infinite scroll, were designed to be addictive.
Although the court ruling has been lauded as a "game-changing moment" for social media companies, it's of little practical use to
social media companies, it's of little practical use to parents across the world who are trying to cut down their kids' screen time. The BBC asked parenting experts for tips on how to separate offsprings away from their phones – even if only for a short while. To read the full article on BBC News **click here** (Getty Media Image)

"Nowhere near enough" being done to tackle misogyny among young boys



Estimates reveal one in five girls aged 16-19 in England and Wales have experienced domestic abuse. Not enough is being done to tackle misogyny among young boys and the toxic online influences on them, according to the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for domestic abuse in response to data from the Office for National Statistics showing an estimated 18% of 16- to 19-year-old girls are victims of abuse. The ONS found that young people aged 16-19 and 20 to 24 represented a large share of those experiencing domestic abuse than any other age group. To read the full Guardian article **click here.** (Image: Tinnakorn jorruang/Shutterstock)

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: