

# Special Guardians World

Winter 2019: Issue four



SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP  
NORTH LONDON

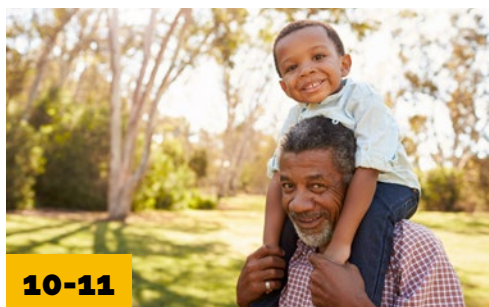


**Callum's  
SG Story**

**SG Summer  
Party**

**Body & Soul  
Charity**

Visit us online [specialguardiansnorthlondon.co.uk](http://specialguardiansnorthlondon.co.uk)



# Inside this issue

Welcome from Lorna, North London Consortium Manager	2
Dates for your diary	3
Callum's SG Story	4-5
A snapshot of Kinship Connected North London 2018-19	6-7
SG Summer party	8
Relax and Unwind Puzzle	9
Looking at Special Guardianship - from a granddads point of view	10-11
Body & Soul	12-13
Happy 'Shana' Tova	14
Recipe - Honey Cake	15
Contact us	16



## Dear Special Guardians

Welcome to the fourth edition of Special Guardians World. I hope you will find some useful

information in this newsletter – whether this is knowing more about what is going on for Special Guardians, ways to connect and things of interest.

Autumn brought us into Kinship Care Week - 5th-11th October. Grandparents Plus organised a number of events to steer a national campaign to build more awareness about the role of kinship carers – such as all the things kinship carers do and how many carers there are around the UK.

The North London Consortium

promoted the activities on our website **specialguardiansnorthlondon.co.uk** and added to the social media campaign, which helped raise awareness. Some of our boroughs hosted special events during the week. Also, as a way of recognising what Kinship Carers do, Islington hosted a special event at their support group for Special Guardians on the 8th October.

Wishing you all the best.

*Lorna*







## Dates for your Diary

The Consortium provide a range of training to help support your family. The courses are for SG families whose children were in court proceedings before the SGO was granted. Ask your local support team if you would like to attend any of these training programmes – you'll find the contact telephone numbers on the back page.

### One-day training by specialist trainers

#### Contact – tips and advice on managing contact

Trainer: Julia Davies

Date 14 February 2020 in Camden

#### Managing Behaviour through demonstrating therapy techniques

Trainer: Julia Davis

#### Telling Difficult Stories – talking to your child about their family history

Trainer: Judith Ellis

### In-depth training and support

The consortium is working directly with a range of independent trainers who can provide in-depth training to SG families. Payment can be made via the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) which is available to support children under a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) if your child was in court proceedings leading up to the SGO being made. **Ask your support team for more information on whether this training is suitable, and if so, how your social worker can access the Support Fund on your behalf.**

### Great Behaviour Breakdown Training

Independent trainers provide step-by-step advice on how to reduce and eliminate difficult behaviour. This is a six-day training programme and no prior experience is needed. You will learn about the effect of stress and family breakups on a child and their behaviour, and learn some new ways to care for them in a way that helps to heal past hurts and create a calmer home environment.

You will be taught clear practical steps for managing challenging behaviour and for parenting children who have had separation and

loss. On-going optional support is available if you wish through a monthly online webinar – for six months after training.

The next course date and venue will be confirmed in due course. Contact your local team if you are interested.

### Non Violent Resistance – NVR

This training is for special guardians who have young children or teenagers with challenging, destructive or showing violent behaviour. Meetings are in groups with other special guardians, with the specialist facilitators, a child psychotherapist and a therapeutic parent coach. They are joined by a special guardian who is trained to assist with the course.

You'll learn how to:

- make changes
- calm things down
- reduce stress
- hold back from verbally or physically lashing out and
- feel more in control.

New dates will be announced next year but for more details you can contact PAC-UK [www.pac-uk.org](http://www.pac-uk.org) or telephone 020 7284 5879.

### Body and Soul Families

This charity provides specialist long term support to children and young people. Their continuous support allows children to learn through their experiences and develop the skills and understanding necessary to be able to connect, heal and grow. There's lots more information on pages 12 and 13 of this newsletter, and you can visit their website [www.bodyandsoulcharity.org](http://www.bodyandsoulcharity.org)

# CALLUM\*

## My SG Story



Callum now 12 and his younger brother Andrew 9 moved in with their grandma Susan under a Special Guardianship order 3 years ago.

In this interview Callum shares his life story of his journey transitioning from living with his birth mother to be with his grandma.

### **What was life like before you moved in?**

Life was difficult in every way. We didn't have the basics; the electricity would always go out and there was never any hot water so it was hard to stay clean. I was sad and would sleep most of the time as there wasn't anything to do. Mum didn't have a lot of money so we went without meals a lot too. My clothes didn't fit properly, they were too small or too big and I didn't really get anything new.

I didn't go to school a lot so my grades were bad which made it hard for me when I did go, I didn't really understand why things were like this and I didn't like it. Strange people would come to the house a lot, I didn't know at the time but they were social workers. I liked it when they would come, I was happy that there was someone to talk to.

I was excited when they finally told me I would be leaving my mum as I didn't like what

A lot has happened in Callum's life, and after months of Children's Services working with Callum and his family, it was decided it was best that he lives with his grandma Susan\*.

life was like. I wanted to go and live with my dad or grandma and I knew my brother Andrew would be coming with me, which made it easier.

**How did it feel for you and your family during this time?**

I was happy to leave mums, she was sad to see me go but that didn't make me feel any better about things. I still have contact with her once a month but I don't look forward to it as I don't like my mum that much anymore. When I do go to contact, it is nice to see my sister – I was upset to leave her.

I get to see my dad now once a week, I really like seeing him.

**What's life like now?**

Since moving in with my grandma life is much better now, I like that the electricity doesn't go out and I get fed well. She spends lots of time with me and we do nice things like watch movies together, just talk and I get to play my Xbox.

I feel much happier, we get lots of clothes and toys and have routine, like dinner time, bed time, taking showers.

At school, I am doing well too, I understand the work and my grades have gone up which I am happy about. When I am older I would like to be a YouTuber or work in gaming and making apps and this feels achievable now I am doing better in school.

**What advice would you give to SG parents to help them settle in their SG children into their home?**

My grandma helped me settle in by making my favourite meals and buying me nice things, she also redecorated our room nice for us so it feels more like home now.

As a SG parent, you need to be prepared for anything that could happen such as, naughty behaviour or if something bad happens or has happened with the child's birth family. You can help by comforting them and trying to be understanding of what they are going through.

Make sure you are financially stable too so you can actually take care of the children as it is nice to have essentials as well as nice things sometimes.

**What advice would you give to young people in the same situation as yourself?**

Be calm and make sure you do the right thing. If something bad has happened in the past try and keep it in the past and not let it affect your life now. Do well by staying in school and studying well.

Don't lie about your feelings and don't keep things bottled up. Be open and honest with the people around you.

\* Names have been changed. Model photo used.

If you have an SG story, please get in touch and we'll arrange a telephone interview.

# A snapshot of Kinship Connected North London



**G**randparents Plus is the only national charity dedicated solely to supporting kinship carers. Kinship Connected offers a tried and tested model to help local authorities meet their requirements to the Family and Friend Care: statutory guidance for local authorities.

Kinship Connected works across six North London boroughs; Enfield, Haringey, Barnet, Camden, Islington and Hackney.

Kinship Connected offers a wide range of one to one advice and support to carers on a range of challenges they are facing including; advice on how to cope with temporary exclusions from schools, advocacy at meetings, identifying therapeutic interventions for children and carers and signposting to courses. We have also been able to direct kinship carers to our Advice Line, who have been able to provide crucial financial advice and apply for





grants covering items such as fridges, washing machines, beds and activities for the children.

Over the past year Kinship Connected has provided help and support to 57 Special Guardians. In addition, we continue to work with all other types of Kinship Carers who are formerly registered.

*"My life has been up in the air at the moment and I don't know what I would have done without the support of the Kinship Carer Project Worker or Grandparents Plus Advice Line."*

**Paul – Enfield Special Guardian**

We provide kinship carers with a safe and supportive opportunity to attend support groups and coffee mornings which are run across all 6 Boroughs. The project worker has attended 36 support groups and established 39 coffee mornings. These events ensure peer support is available to those not receiving one-to-one support.



*"Because of the support group, you know you're not alone."*

**Iris – kinship carer**

To find out more about how you can attend please call **Maxine** on **07931 158 376**.

Here are just a few of the highlights over the past year:

Grandparents Plus ran a workshop on self-care and we continue to encourage carers to remember the importance of looking after themselves.

We held a successful Celebration Day last October. Families joined us at the

Science Museum for a great day out. This along with our days out at the park was a great opportunity for kinship carers and children to come together.

Kinship Connected carers have been involved in focus groups that are informing Government in making policy changes, helping to adapt and develop therapy workshops and have volunteered with Grandparents Plus in various capacities. Please contact **Kishma** on **020 8709 8184** to discuss volunteer opportunities or find out more here: **[www.grandparentsplus.org.uk/volunteer](http://www.grandparentsplus.org.uk/volunteer)**.

*"I look after my sister's children a 6-year-old boy and 12-year-old girl. I was encouraged and inspired by the project worker to do volunteering with Grandparents Plus as a Grants Application Volunteer. It really gave me insight in the role we do as Special Guardians. The volunteering is so fulfilling when you know you are making a difference in the life of a child with a challenging background."*

**Cathy – Hackney Special Guardian**

# SG Summer Party

**'My friends all have older children, so this is really good way to meet families with younger children.'**

This year's special guardianship summer party was truly fun-tastic!

Back in May 2019, SG carers, their children and workers descended on St Mary's church on Upper Street in Islington. Families from all over north London and beyond came together to enjoy a great lunch, good music and lots of fun.

Entertainers Cheeky Monkey's got up to all sorts of mischief when they entertained the children with exciting party games and dancing, just what everyone needed!

These summer parties are a great way to help children make friends with other special guardian children and their siblings, while having a great time making bright and colourful badges and decorating cookies with different edible treats.

The JooDoo Drummers brought a wow to the day too, with a real chance for the children (and

the adults) to be part of their very own drumming band – beginners were soon experts, and the sounds and the smiles were mesmerising – you couldn't help but sway to the sounds of the beat!

This event was a great opportunity for special guardians to meet new friends and catch up with old friends. Have a chat over pizza about being an SG family – the great times and the not so great times. Social workers were on hand to offer help and support where needed, as well as information about training and future events.



**'Good to see old faces – really worthwhile coming, and great to meet new families during lunch.'**



**'My child and another child only meet up at the SG events – they are inseparable!'**



To hear more about SG events, make sure your SG support team have your contact email.

A huge thank you to all the families and staff who came along and helped out to make our summer party a knock out!



# Relax and Unwind

We all need a little time to rest and relax, especially carers. So why not, grab a few quiet minutes with a cuppa and to sit back and enjoy our puzzling wordsearch. Good luck!

M	F	U	T	M	E	H	X	E	N	A	P	D	F	R
M	D	R	R	N	O	V	S	G	U	P	G	S	F	T
K	U	E	E	B	E	I	O	J	F	K	U	S	T	G
N	S	S	B	S	C	S	I	L	P	U	Z	E	Z	G
T	O	I	I	R	H	E	E	L	U	F	D	N	I	M
A	E	I	E	C	L	A	Q	R	A	T	R	D	X	R
S	Q	X	T	S	Z	D	I	H	P	A	M	N	F	M
X	E	G	R	I	T	D	Y	R	U	U	U	I	O	Y
S	L	E	E	P	R	W	V	S	F	E	C	K	R	G
T	N	E	M	N	E	T	H	G	I	L	N	E	G	R
G	T	J	M	Q	V	X	U	S	P	M	N	F	I	E
M	E	D	I	T	A	T	E	N	E	X	F	S	V	N
S	K	N	M	L	W	A	Z	K	A	D	B	J	E	E
A	K	E	E	P	Y	C	A	M	C	A	G	O	Y	I
A	K	R	K	R	A	P	H	Q	E	K	Z	Z	I	B

Find the following words in the puzzle. Words are hidden ➡️⬅️↘️

ENERGY

ENLIGHTENMENT

EXERCISE

FORGIVE

FRESHAIR

FUN

HOBBIES

KINDNESS

LOVE

MEDITATE

MINDFUL

MUSIC

NUTRITION

PEACE

PRESENT

RELAX

REST

SLEEP

YOGA

# Looking at Special Guardianship...

## from a grandad's point of view

Being in our 60s, we didn't expect to suddenly become parents again! We were planning for the future, but then life showed us a different road - one that we did not expect to travel down.... but we were glad we did.

Aged 65, married with plans of studying and working a long way from north London, Leon\* and his wife Kim\* were content with their new life. One afternoon a phone call came that changed everything. It was news of another pregnancy - this time concealed and another grandchild, this time, a boy. Leon tells us about his journey to becoming a special guardian.

I was stunned, my son's girlfriend had another child - our first grandson. I was proud to be a granddad again, of course, but our first granddaughter, Kasey\* was already being raised by her grandmother, my ex-partner Angie\*. My son and his girlfriend just couldn't cope with parenthood, and life for them was complicated enough with their own issues, so little Kasey couldn't be raised at her birth home. Angie has done a great job and Kasey and I are really close too. That part of our lives was really difficult and we didn't really expect to repeat it, so

after all the discussions and conversations between us all, it was a shock to be called up and told there was a new grandchild.

There was no doubt, Marcus\* was going to be removed from his parents' care, and after a discussion with Kim, we decided we wanted to raise our grandson under a Special Guardianship Order. This court order was talked about when Kasey came into care, so this arrangement suited us all well. It was still a huge decision, without a doubt, but it was the best decision we could make in the circumstances. At the time, there were just so many court dates, social worker visits, and trips to and from London - were we exhausted! We pushed on, and the assessment process began; it was in-depth, as I expected it would be and at first it was going well; we had a lot to offer and we felt confident in our ability. We felt sure our young grandson would be at home with us sooner than we knew. The process was difficult

at times but we'd committed to this new life and we felt we had to fight to make sure our grandson came home with us.

Weeks later, everything we wanted to happen happened, our grandson came home with us back to the north of England, and to be honest, I don't remember much of it, but my wife was excellent - still is! We try to be the loving parents that Marcus needs, so he feels and knows he is totally loved. We always consider what is best for him, and have very much enjoyed being his family for the last three years and the many years to come. We've 're-learned' the process of learning to take care of a young child again. We're very hands-on to help him become the confident rounded young man we know he can be.

I think as a male carer, I dived into the 'play' role, but it's about identifying what is needed day to day and providing it as well. The more dads that are hands-on, the more we can contribute to



the well-being of the children in our care. We need help too, as Special Guardians we are doing all we can to make better lives for the children, but the local authority can help more too. Families need information about special guardianship not just when we are almost through the

assessment, but before we set out on this journey. We also need their support directly after the Special Guardianship Order is granted; helping with healthcare, financial support if needed and just someone on the end of the phone! Not just because we ask for it, but because the local

authority offer it as standard ..... especially if the family don't live in North London! Not all of us SGs can get to the support groups in London, but we can still use some support. So we're making new friends – locally – especially SG families, like ours. It means the world to me and my grandson.

## Reply from Lorna

Unfortunately, Leon is not alone. If you live a long way from the team who assessed you, it can be difficult to provide support, but with careful planning with your worker, it is hoped some support can be arranged. It is the responsibility of the local authority team who assessed you to also consider your support needs within the first three years of the SGO being made. Before this time is up, sometimes support can be negotiated, such as attending support groups or training but the level of support across England varies quite a bit.

After three years, if you wish for support, you need to contact your local support team where you live. Health and educational support should be available straight away, including the pupil premium (additional support in school) and priority school places. It is best to find out as soon as possible what support is available in your local area, whether it will be available straight away or only after three years and what support the team who assessed you can put in place.



INTRODUCING...

# Body & Soul

## FAMILIES

---

**Group therapeutic programming for children & young people  
with a Special Guardianship Order.**

---

The North London Consortium has teamed up with Body & Soul Families, a charity specialising in long-term support to help children and young people work through the challenges they may face. They offer continuous support that provides the opportunity to learn through experience and develop the skills and understanding necessary to be able to connect, heal and grow.

SG families can use their allocation of the Support Fund to cover the cost of these sessions, so please contact your support borough to see if you are eligible.

### **Body & Soul Families Foundations**

Each programme runs a 4-session Foundation course for each age group, taking place on Saturdays at Body & Soul's specially-designed centre in Islington. For children and young people, these provide access to a range of therapeutic support including: drama therapy, music therapy, play therapy and dance psychotherapy. The emphasis on group support provides 'in the moment' learning to help young people build connections and support networks, develop healthy, healing relationships and

regulate their emotions. We encourage them to communicate their needs in a setting relevant to their everyday lives. Connecting with others with similar experiences in a safe space, where people can share without fear of judgement, is a core part of this.

Services are available for:  
Junior explorers – aged 5-7  
Explorers – aged 8-12  
Teen spirit – aged 13-18

### **The Body & Soul team**

Their dynamic, experienced team come from a range of backgrounds and include peer mentors who are often able to connect with the young people in our programmes on a deeper level by relating through their own journeys. The high ratio of staff to young people maximise chances of

young people connecting with someone, allowing us to offer individualised support within the wider group

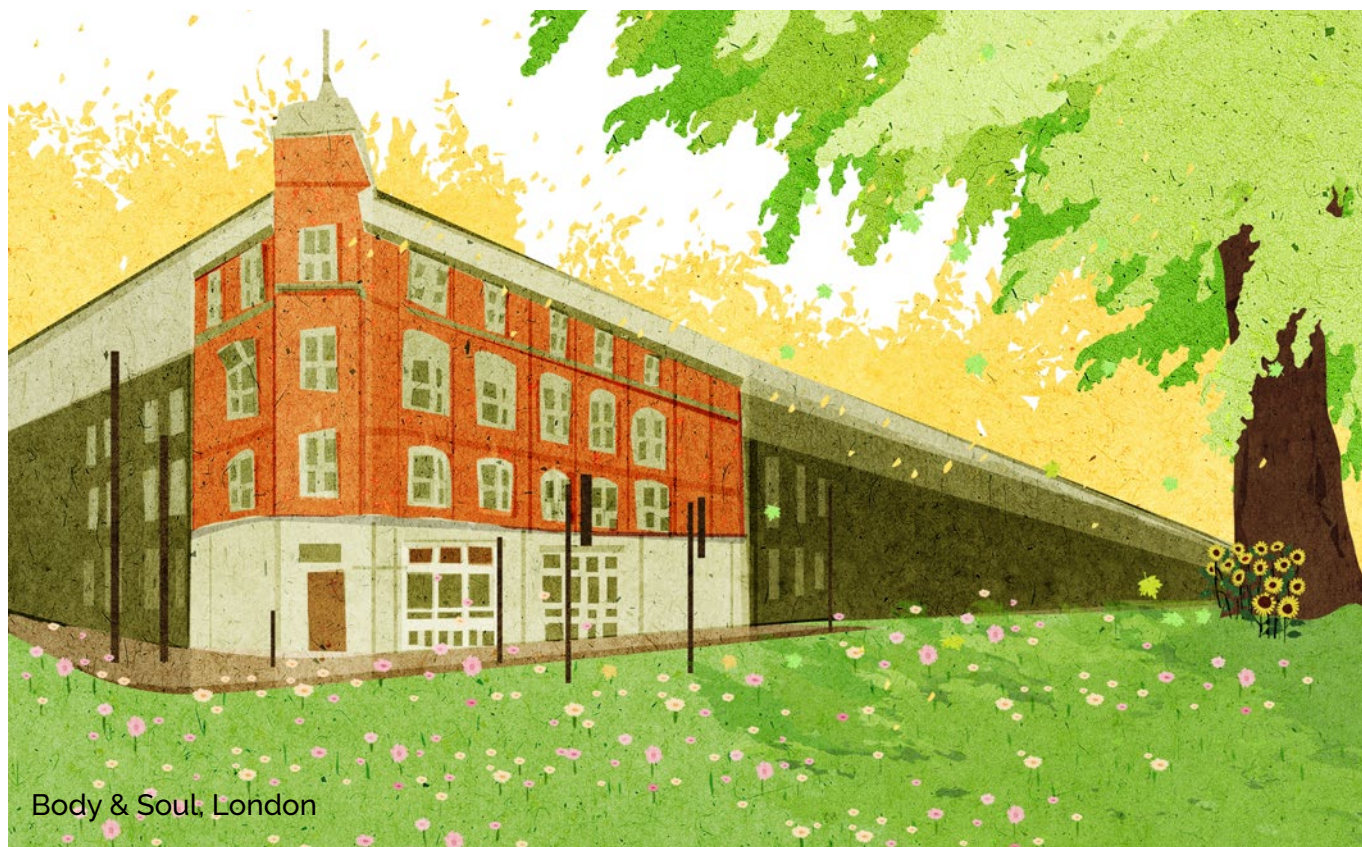
*"When I first came to Body & Soul, it just felt different. It was like having a big brother or sister who just understood me. You need to have that connection to help you when things get tough.*

*That's why I volunteer now, because I know how much it helped me."*

### **Body & Soul Peer Mentor**

### **Parent's Place**

Body & Soul Families Foundations includes a parallel space for parents. Parent's Place provides access to learning and support sessions delivered by therapists specialising in emotional regulation, helping parents manage the emotional



Body & Soul, London

stress of parenting whilst also providing knowledge and confidence to use approaches that meet the needs of their child. For their child to get the full benefit of the programme, it is crucial for parents to be supported as well.

### Reconnection Days

All families are provided with the opportunity of continued support, through monthly 'Reconnection Days', providing continued opportunities to build on peer relationships, ongoing therapeutic support and a greater sense of community connection. Reconnection days use a range of activities

matched with interests in the group, embedding therapeutic elements to develop skills and understanding in a way more likely to engage with young people.

The journey with Body & Soul Families starts with an assessment which is a chance to really find out from young people and parents themselves about what is going on for them now, what their hopes and worries are, as well as strengths, interests and difficulties. This lets us tailor our programmes to best meet individual needs. Your family will meet the team first and get a feel for the space where

each member will be when they join the group, attempting to alleviate any anxieties that often come with new experiences. We introduce you to our way of working and the approach to support-often transforming expectations.

*"It's great that the kids are involved in exciting, engaging and calming activities at the same time as parents receiving excellent and relevant sessions."*

*Great building and food. It's the way services should be delivered."*

**Body & Soul**

If you are interested in Body & Soul Families or want to find out more, please get in touch with your support borough or you can call Body & Soul directly and mention you are a part of the North London Consortium. You may receive funding through the Support Fund.

**t:** 020 7923 6880 **e:** [enquiries@bodyandsoulcharity.org](mailto:enquiries@bodyandsoulcharity.org) **w:** [bodyandsoulcharity.org](http://bodyandsoulcharity.org)

# HAPPY SHANAH TOVA

**F**or Rachel\* and her granddaughters making a honey cake to celebrate the Jewish new year was her way of helping her girls settle into their new home together. Having a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) for Amy\*, 10 and Ruby\*, 2 years old, meant making many changes, but it was also the best possible opportunity to share the traditions and pride of Rosh Hashanah – one of the most joyous celebrations in the Jewish calendar.

Every Rosh Hashanah – is a chance to see in the new year and a time to give generous sweet thoughts to family and friends, to be tolerant and build on the good for the rest of the year. Traditionally this is celebrated as a 'sweet new year' with an apple chosen as the fruit that was dipped in honey on Rosh Hashanah due to the symbolic nature of the fruit. Nowadays the sweet New Year is celebrated by making a delicious honey cake. Rachel shares her story,

'Amy has always been in my life, and was probably the most affected by this whole situation. At first Amy and her mum lived with me, and then moved out and lived very close by. Her mum didn't give her much attention, I stepped in and she spent many days and nights with me while her mum tried to manage her own life. When Amy was five years old, she came to live with me – unofficially. When Amy and Rubys' mum's problems escalated and she was making unsafe decisions, I had to take action and take her to Court so I could have parental responsibility for the children. It's not a nice decision to make, but I had to, for their safety and their future, and for my mental state. I knew the girls had to come and live with me, instead of going into care – and I would have fought tooth and nail for them.

'When they did come to live with me, little Ruby just couldn't understand why she couldn't see her mum – she was only 2 years old. So I had

to do things to 'distract' her and calm her down. When I baked a cake, she would always say "Nanny, can I help?" She would start things off, sifting flour, mixing, etc. and then we'd follow the recipe together. It was a special time to bond, a time to talk about how I made the same cake with my family when I was little. Doing something together – like making a cake – is one of the many things we enjoy and at the end we have a nice cake to enjoy!'

'The girls came to live with me a few years ago now. I remember it was summer. By September, both girls had settled – they felt secure, no more arguments – and Ruby started to feel happier. Three years on, both girls are so much more confident and happy-go-lucky, and when they do see their mum, they are happy to say 'bye mum' without the upset it used to be at the end of each contact.

\* Names changed

**My dad always said, 'be worldly wise and be proud to learn.  
Everyone has the right to believe what they want' I always share that with my girls!**





# Honey Cake

## Dry ingredients

225 g plain flour  
225 g self-raising flour  
11/2 tsp bicarbonate soda  
40 g cocoa powder

## Wet ingredients

4 eggs  
345 g caster sugar  
185 mls vegetable oil  
500 g honey  
Dash of vanilla extract  
375 mls hot water

## Method

Preheat oven 180c and grease a 27cm ring cake tin (without a removable base). Sift dry ingredients together into a bowl.

In a separate bowl, mix the wet ingredients until well combined, then mix the dry mixture into wet mixture alternating with the hot water. Pour into the cake tin, bake for 1 hour or until skewer inserted comes out clean. Allow the cake to cool before turning out of the tin.

Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish new year, a time to repent and bring in the new; a time for hope and sweet things to come. It is a tradition at this time of year to serve sweet things at the table, like honey cake along with apples and honey, and it can be made any time of the year.

## MORE INFORMATION

Don't forget to sign up with your local SG support team to receive the Special Guardians World newsletter, training events and the annual fun day for all the family. The newsletter is packed with information about training support and advice, or visit the SG website:

[www.specialguardiansnorthlondon.co.uk](http://www.specialguardiansnorthlondon.co.uk)

## GET IN TOUCH

Get in touch if you need advice or support for you or the child you are caring for. Please contact your local borough.

### BARNET

Barnet Children's Service  
Nth London Business Park  
Oakleigh Road South  
London N11 1 NP

020 8359 5705

### ENFIELD

Enfield Children's Services,  
Triangle House  
305-313 Green Lanes  
London N13 4YB

020 8379 8490

### HARINGEY

Haringey Children & Young  
People's Service, River Park  
House, 225 High Road,  
London N22 8HQ

020 8489 3108

### CAMDEN

Camden Family Services,  
Crowndale Centre,  
218 Eversholt Street  
London NW1 1BD

020 7974 3082

### HACKNEY

Hackney Children and Young  
People's Services, 1 Hillman  
Street, London E8 1DY

020 8356 5379 (9am-5pm)

020 8356 2710 (5pm-9am)

### ISLINGTON

Family Plus Team  
3 Elwood Street  
London, N5 1EB

020 7527 1012 Mon, Wed and  
Fri from 10am-1 pm