**What support is available to Special Guardians?**

It is expected that Special Guardians would make use of universal services, for example health, housing and benefits, which are freely available to all parents and carers of children. Where a child’s needs are above those offered by universal services the Local Authority may provide support to help you care for the child (ren). There are 2 kinds of support usually offered (1) financial support and (2) other support. The support provisions will be documented within a Support Plan following a detailed assessment of need.

**What is meant by financial support?**

This is a periodic payment (otherwise known as an allowance) which is usually paid on a monthly basis. This is assessed using a set national formula produced by the Department for Education. As part of the financial assessment you will be requested to provide information about your financial situation and provide documentary support.

If a regular financial allowance is payable then this will be reviewed at 2 points in the first year. The first review is 3 months after the Order is made to ensure that all available benefits have been claimed by you. The second and any subsequent reviews will be held on an annual basis on the anniversary of the Order being made. These annual reviews will involve a reassessment of your financial situation and the child(ren)’s needs. This review may result in any financial allowance either reducing, increasing or staying the same.

You will receive written confirmation of your financial allowance.

You are entitled to request a financial assessment, however, this does not automatically lead to financial support being provided and will be based upon an assessment of the child(ren)’s needs and your financial situation.

**What is meant by other support?**

This can include therapeutic support, help with contact between the child and his/her/their parents, mediation, nursery provision, furniture, and subject to conditions, a one off financial payments for home adaptations, or purchasing of a vehicle

**What is a Special Guardianship Support Plan?**

This is a formal written document which accompanies the Special Guardianship Report at the time the Court grants the Order. This document sets out what support will be made available, who will be responsible for that support and how long the support will be made available for and when it will be reviewed. These support plans are approved by Darlington Access to Resources Panel (DARP).

**What happens if I’m not happy with the proposed support?**

If you are unhappy with the proposed support plan then you can contact the child(ren)’s social worker who will assist you with your query and provide advice and talk you through any processes in reviewing any part of the plan. This may include requesting a review of the child(ren)s needs. It is hoped that any issues with the proposed support are addressed informally prior to making any complaint under the Council’s complaints procedure.

**Who to contact about my support plan?**

You can contact the child(ren)’s social worker on 01325 406178