**Special Guardianship Assessments 1 Minute Guide**

This document summarises the Family Justice Board interim guidance when in proceedings where an extension of care proceedings is required due to a Special Guardianship assessment, although the scope of the guidance applies to all cases involving prospective special guardians.

The full document can be accessed [here](https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/fjc-sg-interim-guidance-pfd-approved-draft-21-may-2019-1.pdf).

1. Wherever possible alternative carers should be identified at an early stage – ideally during pre-proceedings and including convening a family group conference.

2. A Special Guardianship assessment must be evidence based, balanced and child focussed and will usually require three months to complete. It will use the document ‘Timetabling and Timescales for Full Family and Friends assessments[[1]](#footnote-2)’ and the Family Rights Group Assessment Guide[[2]](#footnote-3) as the model for good practice.

3. Identification of alternative carers **SHOULD NOT** rely upon the parents’ approval or disapproval but must be focussed on the child’s interests.

4. If the viability assessment does support further assessment, the local authority must notify the person being assessed of the procedure to challenge the assessment and give them the opportunity to object and to seek leave of the Court to be joined as a party.

5. Where potential Special Guardians identified late in the proceedings/permanence planning – the person needs to be a viable and a realistic alternative to justify delay.

6. Other reasons for justifiable delay:-

 (a) assessing someone abroad,

(b) needing to assess the quality of the relationship between the potential carer and the child. This can include moving the child to live with them for assessment.

7. A Special Guardianship Assessment that does not include any assessment of the proposed carer’s relationship with the child is likely to be regarded as incomplete.

8. The Legal Framework for the child being placed during proceedings with the possible carer needs to be considered. Suggestions are:-

 (a) temporary foster carer with Interim Care Order

 (b) Child Arrangements Order with an interim Supervision Order although the potential consequences of this must be taken into consideration[[3]](#footnote-4).

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1. [Timetabling and timescales for full Family and Friends Assessments](https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/timescales-for-full-f-and-f-assessment-1-1.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. <https://www.frg.org.uk/involving-families/family-and-friends-carers/assessment-tool> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Since April 2016, children cared for by special guardians who were ‘looked after immediately before the special guardianship order was made, have been eligible for the adoption support fund. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)