



Special Guardianship

First steps towards an SGO



Hello and welcome.

In this guide I hope to tell you a little more about what the process of applying for and getting a Special Guardianship Order looks like.

Kind regards,

The Post Adoption and SGO Support Team and the Kinship Team,
Fostering

What is a Special Guardianship Order?

A Special Guardianship Order is a private law order which allows another person to become a child's 'special guardian'. It is for children who cannot live with their birth parents and gives parental responsibility to the special guardian so that they can make decisions alone about the child's life. When the Order is granted a support plan is written which details the support you are entitled to you whilst the order is in place.

How the process starts

If the child has a social worker they will talk to you, and might complete a short assessment called a viability assessment. If those initial assessments are positive, you may be allocated your own Supervising Social Worker who will talk you through the process. If the child doesn't have a social worker but you still wish to apply for a Special Guardianship Order you can make an application directly to the court. An SGO can also be a recommended permanence plan for a child subject to care proceedings.

Application Pack

Application Pack

Before your Supervising Social Worker visits you for the first time, you will receive an application pack by post, containing:

- A Connected Persons/Special Guardianship application form;
- Disclosure and Barring Service check application forms;
- Declaration of Health forms;
- Other information and guidance related to Special Guardianship and fostering.

Who is a Supervising Social Worker?

This is a social worker that is experienced in assessing and supporting Fostering and Connected Person carers.

Finance/Legal Advice

You may also separately receive a Special Guardianship finance assessment application form. This requests financial information to calculate your eligibility for financial support whilst children are in your care subject to a Special Guardianship Order.

The finance assessment means-tests your disposable income, and using this to calculate the payable proportion of the relevant fostering allowance in Lincolnshire. This is subject to annual review in case your financial circumstances change.

We can also pay up to £250 for you to get legal advice following a positive Special Guardianship assessment, so you have an independent perspective on what Special Guardianship means for you.

Who is a Connected Person?

A connected person is someone who cares for a Child in Care who they already have an established relationship with.

Training

We ask that Connected Persons and Special Guardianship applicants complete a one day preparatory training course. If you are approved as a Connected Persons Carer, you would have to complete the mandatory training for all foster carers, including:

- First Aid
- Safe Care
- Safeguarding
- Trauma informed Practice
- Equality and Diversity (e-learning)
- E-safety (e-learning)
- Information Sharing (e-learning)

Who Will Visit You?

Whilst you are temporarily approved as a Regulation 24 Carer, you are likely to be visited frequently (weekly/fortnightly) by your Supervising Social Worker in order to complete the assessment. Your Supervising Social Worker will then visit you every four weeks. Children's Social Workers will usually visit you every four to six weeks, depending on the children's circumstances.

You may also be visited by other people, including:

- o the Children's Guardian (who represents the children's interests in court);
- o Independent Reviewing Officers (who are experienced social workers who chair children's care reviews);
- o Independent visitors (who voluntarily visit children in care as an independent member of the public).

Children in Care Reviews

You will be invited to attend Children in Care review meetings, the purpose of which is to review plans for children in care.

There is a review within 20 days of children entering care, a further review within three months of the first, and then reviews every six months.

The Assessment

The Schedule 21 report covers topics such as:

About You

- The events of your childhood and adulthood;
- Personality and relationships;
- Household members and lifestyle; including the views of other household members / your own children.
- Motivation to be special guardianship/kinship carers.

Please be aware that the assessment requires a lot of information about you and your lives to date. We carry out references with friends, family members, ex-partners and children you have cared for as part of the assessment.

We also carry out references with children's schools, Health Visitors, your employer, your landlord, and other statutory agencies in order to ensure that children will be safe and well cared for. Further references and checks may be required

You can request sections of your assessment be redacted from other parties in care proceedings (usually children's parents), but this is at the discretion of the court. The assessment is always provided unredacted to the court and the Children's Guardian.

A Schedule 21 assessment is the assessment that your Supervision Social Worker and the child's Social Worker will write to consider whether the child living with you under an SGO is the right plan or not



Once the SGO is in place

Who can Help?

We know that being a Special Guardian means you might need help while you care for a child. The Post Adoption and SGO Support team is here to help you. They are specially trained to understand what a Special Guardian, the Children they care for, and the wider family have been through. You can ask for support at any time including an assessment of need which can help explore what you and your family need.

Are you eligible for Post Order Support in Lincolnshire

To access targeted or specialist support you must be an SGO carer, child who is subject to an SGO or a wider family member of a child with an SGO. You must also:

- Live in Lincolnshire or Rutland
- If you live in another Local Authority but a Lincolnshire court granted the SGO within the last 3 years. After this you should talk to the Local Authority you live in.

The Post Adoption and SGO Support Team offer a range of universal support to any child subject to an SGO. To access any of the targeted or specialist services an assessment of need will be completed first.



Customer Service Centre 01522 782111
Adoption Support Helpline 01522 554056
<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/>

