



# Sandwell

Children's Trust

Become a  
special  
guardian for  
a child you  
care for.

Foster for



**Sandwell**

Children's Trust

# What is a Special Guardianship Order?

A **Special Guardianship Order (SGO)** is a court order that says a child will live permanently with someone (who is not their parent) until they are 18.

A special guardianship order gives the special guardian parental responsibility for the child. This gives them the authority to take all major decisions about the child's upbringing and day-to-day care.



## The following adults can apply for a Special Guardianship Order



- A relative who has lived with the child for at least the last year
- Anyone who has lived with the child for at least three of the last five years. This does not have to have been continuous
- Anyone who has a child arrangements order which says that the child lives with that person
- A foster carer who has lived with the child for at least the last year
- Anyone who has the consent of the parents
- If the child is in care, anyone who has the consent of children's services

A special guardianship order does not remove parental responsibility from the child's birth parents. The special guardian should consult them in relation to important decisions about the child, although the special guardian has final say in respect of most decisions.

You can  
be a...



Family Friend



Unrelated foster carer



Grandparent



Aunt or uncle



Brother or sister



Other relative

# Decisions a Special Guardian cannot make

There are some things a special guardian cannot do without the parents' permission. They cannot:

- Change the child's surname.
- Take the child abroad for more than three months.
- Agree to the child being placed for adoption.

Parents cannot apply to end (or 'discharge') a special guardianship order without the permission of the court. They would only get this permission if they could show that there had been a significant change of circumstances since the special guardianship order was made. They would also have to show that it is in the child's best interests for the order to be discharged.



Unlike adoption, the child remains legally a member of their birth family under a special guardianship order, and so it is often considered the most suitable order for arrangements where a child moves to live permanently with a family member or friend.

## How to become a Special Guardian


If a child is Looked After by the Trust a Special Guardianship Order is one of the ways of making sure they have a secure permanent home and a social worker may talk to you about this. However, it is up to the Carer and/or family member to decide if this is something they want to consider.

Prospective Special Guardians need to give the Trust three months written notice of their intention to apply. If a child is looked after, the Notice of Intention should go to the Child's Local Authority or Trust, otherwise it is the proposed Special Guardian's Local Authority or Trust who will need to be notified. This notice period is to allow the Local Authority or Trust time to investigate the suitability of the proposed Special Guardian and to prepare a written report for the court.



A Notice of Intention to apply is not needed when a Special Guardianship order may be made where there is another application in respect of the child already being heard in court, for instance care proceedings. The court may decide a Special Guardianship Order can be made where there is already a strong pre-existing relationship between the Child and the Special Guardian, where caring for the Child is a tried and tested arrangement.

## Support available under a Special Guardianship Order

- Advice & Guidance for the duration of the Order
  - Children Looked After at the time of the Order will be supported as Children in Need for a period of 6 months. The support will be a minimum of 6 weekly contact with the Special Guardian
  - Assessment of Need & Development of Support Plans
  - Support with housing issues, advice, and signposting
  - Mediation support for contact issues
  - Liaison with cross boundary working
  - Signposting to advocacy and support services.
  - Kinship Care ([www.kinship.org](http://www.kinship.org))
  - Family Rights ([frg.org.uk](http://frg.org.uk))
  - Family information Service Hub: [fis.sandwell.gov.uk](http://fis.sandwell.gov.uk)
  - Waiting Room.org
  - Support Groups, Special Events & activities
  - Support with education, attend school meetings, SENDIAS referrals.
  - Access to appropriate foster carer training
  - Financial Support can be considered in line with the financial policy
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- Leaving Care Services for Children Looked After prior to the Order being granted
  - Access to the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) for services such as therapeutic life story work, play therapy, attachment-based support etc., for children and young people who were previously looked after prior to the Special Guardianship Order. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/adoption-support-fund-asf>

The Special Guardian Support Service should be invited to attend any meetings that the child who is subject of a Special Guardianship order is part of e.g. child in need/child protection/early help/strengthening families/family solutions. This is to ensure that the specialist special guardianship knowledge is considered within the context of future planning.

Special Guardians are entitled to access any universal services in the area that they live.

## Get in touch to find out more



### **Sandwell Children's Trust**

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**[www.sandwellvoice.co.uk](http://www.sandwellvoice.co.uk)**