




# Information on Special Guardianship Orders (SGO)



A simple guide to SGO's and our role in supporting you and your family. Designed by Leicestershire County Council's SGO Assessment Team and Post-SGO Support Team.

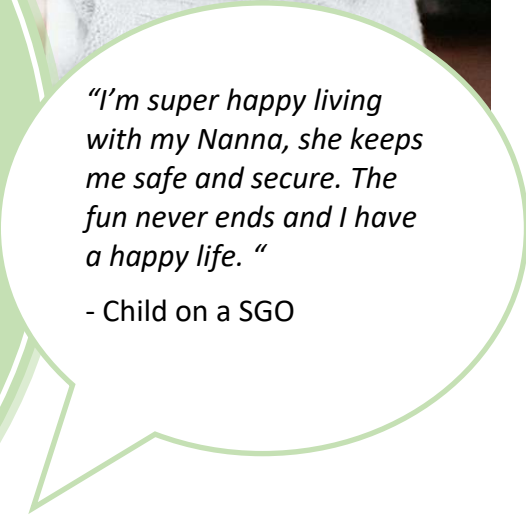
## What is an SGO?

A SGO is a legal order made by a Court giving parental responsibility to individual/s for a child/or children who cannot live with their birth parents. Unlike adoption, it does not end the legal relationship between the child/ren and their birth parents.

As a Special Guardian you would be able to make decisions in the best interests of the child/ren in your care and make sure they are safe and loved until they are 18.

## How do I become a Special Guardian?

To become a Special Guardian an application needs to be made to the court, and a SGO assessment will be completed by a social worker. This will consider if an SGO is the best option for the child/ren and your family.



*"I'm super happy living with my Nanna, she keeps me safe and secure. The fun never ends and I have a happy life."*

- Child on a SGO



## What are the benefits?

There are lots of reasons why you or the people involved in your child/ren's life may think an SGO is the best plan. Having an SGO means you can provide a permanent home and means that the child/ren will no longer be in care. This is a more secure option for children and young people, giving them a true sense of belonging. It also means that as the Special Guardian you can make day-to-day decisions about the child's care and upbringing.

# SGO Assessment Team



Annie O'Hagan  
Senior Practitioner

Angela Hallam  
Senior Practitioner



Emma Bowers  
Support and Assessment Worker



Sam Stone  
Team Manager

## What do we do?

- We can arrange information visits about SGO's and post-SGO support. (For those on a full care order)
- We can offer support to you as carers to overcome worries such as managing family contact.
- We can offer discretionary funding for one off legal advice
- We can complete the SGO assessment which will go to court. This is similar to your fostering assessment.
- We can complete a SGO support plan to help you in the future. We arrange family network meetings as part of this.
- We can complete direct work with you, the child/ren, and family members to hear everyone's voice
- We can complete financial assessments

## How do I get in touch?

If you would like to find out more then please speak to the child's social worker who will ask us to get in touch.

Alternatively if you would like an informal chat with a member of our team please contact 0116 3053051 and ask for either Annie O'Hagan, Angela Hallam or Emma Bowers.

# Post-SGO Support Team



Harriet Pearson-Coe  
Social Worker



Sammy Jo Squires  
Support Worker



Sheryl Peberdy  
Support worker/Play therapist



Lisa Deakin  
Senior Practitioner



Gemma Barber  
Team Manager

## How can we help?

- We complete an assessment of need and arrange the relevant support for the child
- We offer an advice line to Special Guardians
- We make applications to the adoption support fund for therapy (available for previously looked after children)
- We take cases to permanence panel for therapy if required
- We run annual events for Special Guardians and children
- We send out quarterly newsletters with helpful updates and information
- We offer training for Special Guardians
- One off funding for legal advice maybe available as a discretionary one off payment depending on individual circumstances.

*"As an SGO it is hard to put into words what support means to you. It is really difficult to quantify the value of having a supportive, understanding, non-judgemental, empathetic and experienced person to talk to.*

*The value of this is huge.*

*I will be forever grateful for the support and encouragement that Sheryl gave to me at such a difficult time. I really was struggling. If I hadn't of had it I really think that I may have 'gone under'. I also know that in the future this service will be a lifeline for me and I know many others too." - Cathy Thompson (SGO)*

## How to Access

Send us an email at  
[SGOsupport@leics.gov.uk](mailto:SGOsupport@leics.gov.uk)

OR

Call us on our advice line between 9am and 12pm on Thursdays

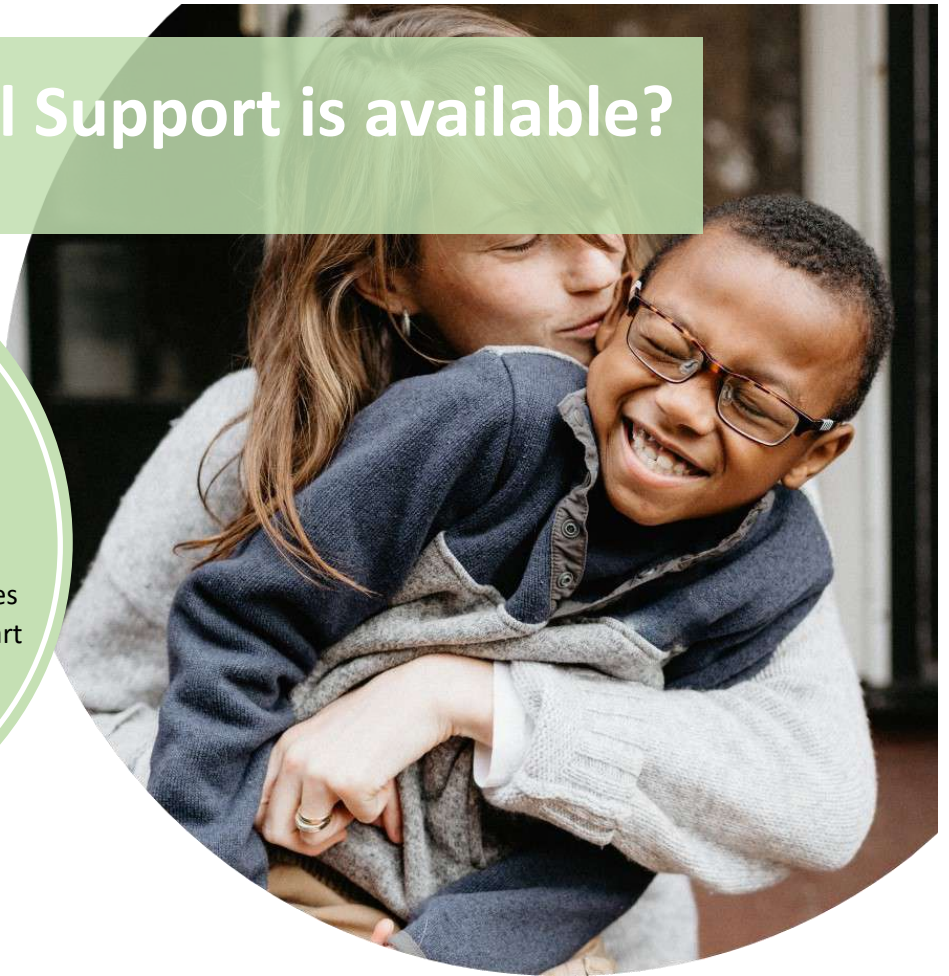
01163056645

Our service is available to access if/when needed up until a child is 21 years

# What Financial Support is available?

This section is designed to help you understand the Financial Support available as a Special Guardian in comparison to a Kinship Carer.

You can talk to us more about finances and what you will be entitled to as part of your visit.



Financial Support Available	Kinship Foster Carer	Special Guardianship Oder (SGO)
Child Benefit		✓
One of legal advice	✓	✓
Court application fees	✓	✓
Christmas and Birthday Allowance	✓	

## Fostering Payments and Financial Assessments

**A means tested financial assessment** will be completed as part of the SGO assessment. The outcome of this will calculate what payments you will receive post-SGO. This is called an SGO allowance and may differ to what you currently receive. There is a 2 year transitional period, post-SGO, where your current fostering payments will be gradually moved over to the SGO allowance.

**A needs-led assessment** can also be completed if it is felt that a higher level of SGO allowance is required. This will consider your child/ren's current and future needs, and what is required from you as carers to meet these needs. A needs-led assessment can also be completed post-SGO if it is felt that your child's needs have changed. This assessment will be presented to a panel who will make a decision on the finances.

# FAQ's

## Will the SGO support service contact me?

Yes, once the Social Worker confirms the SGO has been granted you will receive a letter and they will then contact you by phone. The call is to check that all is well with the order and any support plans being upheld by professionals, to talk about the child/ren (any worries or achievements), discuss contact with parents and any worries or concerns in general.

They will also post a quarterly newsletter with information and news of events for you to attend.

## Can I access training to assist my parenting?

Yes, you can access the free fostering and adoption training, these will be highlighted in the newsletter but there is also a yearly brochure available from County Hall.

## Do we have to do some training?

No, training is optional. However, we may recommend training as a part of your support package which we would encourage you to undertake.

## Can workers in the SGO team supervise the contact after an SGO has been granted?

No, there are no workers available for contact supervision, this has to be arranged and maintained as the order directs using your own supervisors/family members. We will help you identify people during the family network meetings.

## Can SGO support service organise respite?

After the SGO is granted, it would be assessed whether your friends/family members could provide you with support around respite. This would form part of your support plan. Unfortunately, we are not able to provide formal respite.

## Can the SGO service offer advice around contact if we need it?

Yes, we can confirm your legal position, advise creative ways to maintain difficult contacts and support your decision making.

*"Having the stability and long term security of knowing my Granddaughter is safe, loved and happy is priceless.*

*It is a long hard emotional progress but I wouldn't change my decision to apply for an SGO for the world, I would do it again in a heartbeat"*

- Anonymous SGO carer

## Can SGO support service help me get therapeutic support for my child/ren?

Yes, Special Guardians can currently access the Adoption Support Fund which allows a set amount of £5000 per child per year, therapeutic intervention and £2500.00 for a specialist assessment. A social worker will come out to complete an assessment of need.

## Do we still have to attend meetings?

There are no statutory meetings to attend once the SGO has been granted, unless it is accompanied by a supervision order for a set amount of time then there will be meetings to attend during that time.

## Can the service help me increase my SGO allowance?

No, the allowance is means tested by the finance team and after assessment you will be informed by them as to your allowance any queries should be taken up with them, however if your circumstances change a new needs-led assessment can be completed and your finances reassessed.

## Are there opportunities for us to meet and share our experiences with other Special Guardians?

Yes, as well as the monthly support groups the service organises a children's Christmas party, a summer event and an Easter egg hunt. These have become very popular and the feedback is that children make new friends in the same situation and adults feel comfortable amongst themselves.

# Glossary of terms

<b>SGO</b>	Special Guardianship Order
<b>Parental Responsibility</b>	With an SGO the carer holds enhanced Parental Responsibility and the birth parents retain their parental responsibility
<b>Support Plan</b>	A planning tool which is created alongside the SGO assessment and sets out how the child or young person will be supported after an SGO is made. It also includes detail of support the special guardian can access.
<b>Family Network Meeting</b>	Family Network Meetings are a way too bring together the family and friends network around the child to establish who can offer different kinds of support. (e.g emotional, practical, mental, spiritual or cultural) These meetings are used to explore potential future support challenges and who will be around to help.
<b>SGO assessment</b>	This is a similar process to kinship/fostering assessment but considering the suitability to be Special Guardian' for the specific child/children

## Our Core Values:

Our Core Values across Leicestershire is to ensure that when we work with families we are:

**Aspiration** - Being aspirational for our children, families and workforce.

**Being Curious** - Being Curious and paying attention to the detail

**Collaboration** - Building strong working relationships

## Useful Contacts

<https://kinship.org.uk/> - The leading Kinship Care charity in England and Wales. Their help and advice is especially relevant for Special Guardians.

<https://www.family-action.org.uk/what-we-do/children-families/sgs/> -

An a support service which aims to improve outcomes for children living with special guardians

<https://www.sgosupport.co.uk/>

Useful information and resources for Special Guardians.

