**Differences between Connected Foster Care and Special Guardianships.**

**What does it mean to be a Connected Foster Carer?**

* Should the applicant be assessed positively as a potential connected carer, such an assessment is determined via fostering panel; not Court.
* They would be expected to meet the National Minimum Standards and adhere to Fostering Regulations.
* Parental responsibility is retained by birth parents and shared with the local authority.
* All decisions made by themselves as carers would first need to be agreed by those with PR and this would be discussed in detail at a placement planning meeting, whereby a delegated authority form would be completed; clearly outlining the boundaries of their role.
* By fostering the child they understand that they would care for the child and meet their needs.
* Depending on circumstances this could be a short-term or long-term arrangement that could potentially lead on to a Special Guardianship Order if this was something they chose to explore in the future.
* They would receive a fostering allowance per child, per week, depending on their age and needs; there is a set fee for this and this would increase depending on their level of training.
* They would be expected to accept a high level of support and supervision, meaning that they would have to attend training, meetings and be available for both the child’s social worker’s visits, monthly visits and 12 weekly supervision from their own social worker within the fostering team.
* They would be required to keep a daily record for the child and various other written documents in relation to their care.
* **If a Court determined that a long term plan of a Full Care Order be necessary for a child, then the only Connected Care option would be that of Fostering.**

**What does it mean to be a Special Guardian?**

* A special guardianship order is designed to give permanency to until they are 18 years old. Parental responsibility is shared between the special guardian and the birth parents.
* Special guardians should understand that they would be able to make all daily decisions for the child but would not be allowed to change the Child’s name or take them out of the UK for more than three months.
* Special guardians should be aware that the order includes contact with the Childs birth parents, meaning that they would be expected to promote, facilitate, and ensure that the child maintains an ongoing relationship with the birth parents if it is deemed safe and appropriate.
* Applicants applying to become a special guardians would be Fully assessed, DBS checked, and undertake medical assessment, and supply three referees who will be required to complete both verbal and written references.
* It would be expected that a full support plan and means tested financial assessment would be completed as part of the broader assessment. In this care plan is often considered less intrusive than foster care as it does not require the long-term input of children’s social care and the child would not be considered to be a looked after child.
* **Ultimately, it would a Judge He would determine the appropriate care plan for the child and approve any application for special guardianship. It is noted that a special guardianship order is a private order.**