

# What does Special Guardianship mean for you and your family?

A Guide for Sons and Daughters of Foster Carers



# **Guide to Special Guardianship Orders**

**If you are reading this guide, then it means that your parent or carer has asked to be considered as a Special Guardian for a foster child or young person who already lives with you.**

**This guide will give you more information about what a Special Guardianship Order is and what this will mean for you and your family.**



## **What are Special Guardians and Special Guardianship Orders?**

Special Guardians are adults who care for children and young people in their home. The Special Guardianship Order lasts until that child is 18 years of age and so the Special Guardian remains their Special Guardian until then.

Only a Court can make a Special Guardianship Order. The Court that makes the decisions is called a Family Court; this will be explained later in the guide.

If things change and the child doesn't live with you anymore, then it is only the Court who can cancel (revoke) a Special Guardianship Order.

Special Guardianship is a way of giving a child and young people a safe and secure family life while they are growing up. The Order is made where that child cannot be cared for anymore by their parents.

# Why a Special Guardianship Order?

There are a lot of reasons why children and young people cannot live with their parents. For example:

- ❖ Some parents just find it too hard to be parents and even with support, they are not able to give the child what they need.
- ❖ Some parents cause harm to their children.
- ❖ Parents may have asked a relative or close friend to look after their children and this might be because they are ill or have other problems.
- ❖ Where the children's parents have died.

Special Guardianship is a legal way for the child's foster carers, or relatives or other important people being allowed to care for them. This means that they would care for the child until they grow up and are able to leave home.



## What a Special Guardian will do?

A Special Guardian will be expected to look after children and young people until they are an adult (legally they will become an adult when they are 18 years of age). The Special Guardian takes on all the legal responsibilities of parenting the child and young person until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

The Special Guardian will make most of the important decisions, for example:

- ❖ What school the child / young person will go to.
- ❖ Who they have contact with.
- ❖ Decisions about their health and treatment.

**There are some things that a Special Guardian is not allowed to do and they are:**

- ❖ Changing the child / young person's name unless their parents or the Court gives permission.

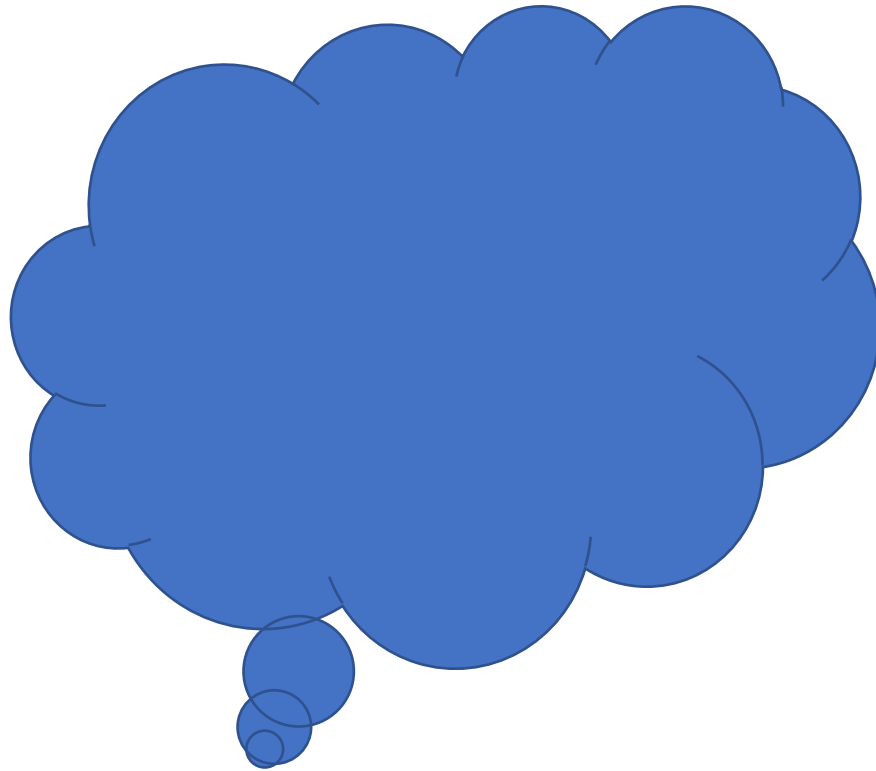
### **What will change?**

The main thing that will change for you is that you know the child or young person will be staying with you until they are at least 18 years of age.

As they are living with you, not much will change, except that you will know that they will be staying with you and they won't have to move. Sometimes the child or young person has mixed feelings about staying with you. It may be a very confusing time for them. You could also have mixed feelings about them staying and it can be confusing for you as well. It's important that you tell people how you are feeling so that any concerns or worries you have can be sorted.



**What questions do you have? What would you like to know more about?**



## **What is going to happen next?**

### **Who will organise the Special Guardianship Order?**

Social Workers work with the child or young person, their parents and your family to work out the best plan for that child.

It's likely that your fostering Supervising Social Worker will want to speak to you to find out how you feel about the child living with you and what a Special Guardianship Order will mean for the child, the adults you live with and you.

**You can write the name of your Supervising Social Worker here who is involved:**


**My supervising social worker is**

.....

**Their telephone number is.....**

**Their email is.....**

**The Social Worker can answer questions that you might have**

<b>Have a think! Is there anything you would like to ask the Social Worker?</b>	
<b>Space to write down any questions you have</b>	<b>Answers to your questions</b>

It is very important that you tell someone how you feel so they can do something about it.

## What about Contact?



Some children and young people keep in contact with their family after a Special Guardianship Order is made.

Contact can happen in different ways. Sometimes it is by letters and sometimes it is meeting up with their family to have contact.

Contact is about keeping in touch, but it must be done in a way that children and young people are safe.

If you have any questions about contact, then please ask the Social Worker who is involved.

### **Where will the decision be made?**

The **Court** is where important decisions like this are made and the Judge is a person who makes these decisions. The Court where these decisions are made is different to where people go if they have done criminal things. This Court is called a Family Court. The meetings with the Judge are private, which means the only people who can go into the Court room are those agreed by the Judge.

The Court will tell a different kind of Social Worker, called a Children's Guardian, to talk to all the adults and children. They may want to talk to you. The Guardian will talk to you about what you want the Judge

to know about how you feel about the plans. This information will help the Judge to decide if a Special Guardianship Order should be made.

Not everybody can become a Special Guardian. Social Workers and Judges must be sure that the people who want to become Special Guardians can look after children and young people properly, so they ask them lots of questions and look at how the adults have lived and how they care for their own children.

If the Judge is happy with what they are told, all their questions have been answered and that children and young people will be safe and happy with the adults who want to be their Special Guardians, then they will make the Special Guardianship Order

### **What about after the Special Guardianship Order is made?**

Contact details for the Child and Family Support Team who can provide advice and guidance about things to do with Special Guardianship Orders is:

Children and Families Support Team (CFST)

Email: Children-Families-Support-Team [Children-Families-Support-Team@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:Children-Families-Support-Team@leicester.gov.uk)

Telephone: 0116 545 6540

### **What happens if I am not happy about this?**

If you do not feel happy about the plan being talked about and do not want a Special Guardianship Order to be made, then please speak to the Social Worker, the adult you live with or someone else that you trust. This can be a time when everything feels confusing. It's normal not to be sure about things, which is why the adults around you need to make sure you know who you can speak to and who will be there to help you.



## **Other useful contact numbers;**

### **The Children's Commissioner for England**

The Children's Commissioner for England promotes and protects children's rights in England. The Commissioner does this by listening to what children and young people say about what matters to them and making sure adults in charge take their views and interests into account. Contact details are:

#### **The Office of the Children's Commissioner**

**Sanctuary Buildings**

**20 Great Smith Street**

**London**

**SW1P 3BT**

**Tel: 020 7783 8330**

**Email: [info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk)**

### **Childline**

This is a special 24-hour helpline for children who are in trouble or at risk of being hurt or abused. Call free on **08001111** or you can find them on a computer, [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

