

SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP

Information for Foster Carers



Why Take Out a Special Guardianship Order and What Will It Mean?

Special guardianship arrangements give children and young people a sense of belonging. A child or young person will have the stability and security of knowing that they will stay with you until they are 18 years old, or longer.



The making of a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) offers a positive permanent family option for some children or young people and you as their carer. An SGO gives your child legal and emotional permanence, to live with you, and for your child to have happy and positive relationships with you and your family.

A Special Guardian is an adult who cares for a child in their home when it is not possible for the child to stay with their parent or current carer.

As a Special Guardian, you can make the day to day decisions about schooling and health care and the child or young person's leisure and social activities, as any parent. The child will no longer have a Social Worker and all statutory visits such as Looked After Reviews and Personal Education Plans will end.

Only a Court can make a Special Guardianship Order. If the Order is made, the Special Guardian will be expected to make a long-term commitment to the child. If things change, then it is only the Court who can end a Special Guardianship Order.

Parents will still have a legal link to the child if this Order is made and they will keep Parental Responsibility for the child.

To become a Special Guardian, the person will need to be assessed by a Social Worker as suitable to care for the child.

When a Special Guardianship Order is granted, the child or young person stops being looked after, the Care Order or Interim Care Order will end and day to day parental responsibility transfers to you.

Financial Support, Fees and Allowances

We are committed to assisting and resolving any practical and financial barriers to enable you to enter a Special Guardianship arrangement. As all circumstances are different the Tax and Benefit Team at FosterTalk can speak with you about the changes when caring for a child under an SGO.

Legal Fees

The Council will provide financial support so that you can have a consultation session with an independent legal advisor before applying for a Special Guardianship Order. This will help you to consider the impact of taking on a SGO in relation to your specific circumstances. The cost of this consultation session will be provided in line with legal aid rates.

In situations where birth parents make a legal application contesting contact, or, request the revocation of an SGO, we will consider any reasonable requests to assist you in obtaining legal advice.

Support Services Assessment and Plan

The child's social worker and your supervising social worker will assess what support the child and your family need and will write an SGO Support Plan to ensure all your specific needs are considered. This will include Special Guardianship payments.

Allowances

When your foster child's plan is confirmed as living with you under a Special Guardianship arrangement, we will ask you to complete a means test, unless you are in receipt of Universal Credit or equivalent. The SGO payment that you receive will be based on the fostering allowance and will increase in line with the Fostering Network rates minus child benefit and child tax credit.



Accreditation Fees

If you receive an accreditation fee for fostering, this will continue at the same rate at the point the SGO is granted, for as long as the child or young person qualifies, up to age 18. Accreditation fees are excluded from means testing.

Discretionary payments

We will consider the making of one-off financial contributions when making costly adjustments to care for the child.

Financial support will cease if the child leaves your home, the young person ceases full-time education or training and starts employment, the young person qualifies for benefits or the child reaches the age of 18.

Children and young people with a disability

You may be eligible to claim additional allowances. Information on these benefits is available from Fostertalk.



Leaving Care Provision

The young person will qualify for advice and support from the Leaving Care Service. For the full details please see

<https://www.leicester.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/adoption-and-fostering/looked-after-children/leaving-care-support/>



Going to University

Where the young person remains living with you, Student Finance England view them as being independent and they will qualify for the same package of support as care leavers. Some universities will also give the same bursary as care leavers. As a former Special Guardian your financial circumstances are not assessed or taken into consideration.

Early Help

There is a range of support you and your family can request from the council's early help service. This can range from universal services to an assessment for targeted services where a Family Support Worker works with you and your family. To find out more about the services available for children, young people and families, you can contact the Advice Point on 0116 4541001 or you can refer to www.leicester.gov.uk/earlyhelp for the list of services on offer.

Contact

Contact arrangements will always be based on what is in the best interest of the child or young person. Where direct supervision of contact is required, this will normally be arranged by you and will be detailed in the Special Guardianship Support Plan. Support and advice with regards to contact will be offered.

Training and Support

We will provide you with a support service from a Post SGO Support Worker based in the Children and Families Support Team (CFST). They will offer a point of contact for support and information.

You will be able to access any of the training courses currently run for Leicester City foster carers following the making of the Special Guardianship Order.

Therapeutic Support

Your child will be provided with a life story book. Where your child or young person requires very specific or longer-term therapeutic support, this will be included in the Support Plan.

Where it is assessed that a child or young person would benefit from a therapeutic intervention after the SGO has been made, a review and reassessment of the SGO can be requested at any time.



Reviewing Support

An annual review of the SGO Support Plan and finances will be carried out with you to complete a statement to confirm that you are continuing to care for your child, at your same address; review your financial circumstances and the needs of your child.

Special Guardians living outside of Leicester City

For the first three years after the Order is made, the Council is responsible for the assessment and provision of the support services; this is to ensure there is continuity for both your child and you and your family.

When the three-year period from the making of the Special Guardianship Order has expired, the Local Authority where your child or young person lives is responsible for assessing and providing ongoing support services.

Leicester City will always remain responsible for the ongoing SGO allowance and the review of this.

