

Special Guardianship

Information for Prospective
Guardians



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.

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 day to day parental responsibility transfers to you.

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

If you are applying for Special guardianship for a child who has not been looked after by the Local Authority, you do not automatically qualify for a support plan. A support plan is written in exceptional circumstances such as when a child has health needs that require additional resources for you as their Special Guardian to support the child's needs.

SGO Allowances

You may be assessed for a Special Guardianship Allowance. This allowance is means tested by the Local Authority as part of your Special Guardianship Assessment. You may be entitled to Child Benefit and other tax allowances.

When do SGO payments stop

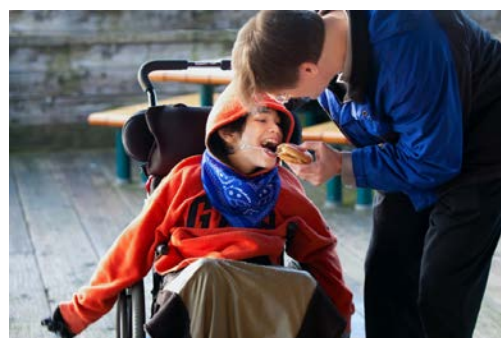
Financial support will cease if the child leaves your home, the young person ceases full-time education or training and starts employment, the young person qualifies for benefits or the child reaches the age of 18.

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 leicester.gov.uk/earlyhelp for the list of services on offer.

Children and young people with a disability

You may be eligible to claim additional allowances for children with disabilities.



Reviewing Support

An annual review of the SGO 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.



Special Guardians living outside of Leicester City

Where the child who is the subject of the order, was not previously looked after, the local authority where the special guardian lives, is always responsible for assessment and support. If the special guardian and his family move, then the responsibility passes to the new local authority.

The local authority where the special guardian previously lived should cooperate as needed to ensure a smooth transition for the child. The local authority where the special guardian lives is responsible for undertaking the assessment of need and provision of any special guardianship support services in response to that assessment.

