**Leicestershire County Council**

**Special Guardianship Order Guidance (Pathway 2)**

Introduction:

Leicestershire County Council children’s social care have committed to reviewing the care plans of their looked after children within the Children in Care Service to establish if permanency via a Special Guardianship Order can be achieved for those in long term foster care. First introduced in the Prime Minister’s Review of Adoption (July 2000), the aim of special guardianship was to provide “*an alternative legal status for children that offers greater security than long term fostering but without the absolute legal severance from the birth family that stems from an adoption order”.*

In November 2021, the SGO Assessment Team within the Children in Care (CIC) Service was established to work with a cohort of looked after children who had been identified and RAG rated by the SGO Review Group. The SGO Review Group has considered the care plans of all children, particularly those in Kinship placements and identified the children where permanency via a Special Guardianship Order can be achieved.

**NB - Currently the full guidance relates to all children within the Children in Care Service and those children within locality teams who are subject of a full Care Order who will be transferring to the Children in Care Service. For those children who are not subject to full Care Orders, the locality social worker will need to refer to the information regarding a needs-led assessment and submitting financial requests.**

SGO Review Group –SGO Review Group flow chart (Pathway 2) Appendix A

All cases within the CIC Service are RAG rated by the CIC Team Managers and presented to the SGO Review Group. Panel members from Fostering, Safeguarding and Virtual School review the cases and provide oversight from their service regarding the child being discussed. For the cases that are rated amber and red and not in a position to progress to an SGO for the child, the SGO Review Group identifies a date it can be returned in the future to be reviewed.

For the cases rated green and yellow, a decision is made to progress discussions with the child’s social worker and request the completion of a trajectory so that clear timelines can be provided to progress the assessment.

SGO Assessment Team

SGO Assessment Team

Team Manager

Senior Practitioner

Senior Practitioner

Support Worker

The case is allocated to one of the Senior Practitioners within the SGO Assessment Team who will arrange a meeting with the child’s social worker, carer and carers supervising social worker. These initial meetings are held to identify if an assessment for an SGO can be progressed without delay or identify if additional work is required such as resolving contact issues etc.

If an SGO assessment can be progressed, a Key Decision Discussion (KDD) with legal oversight is required. Further details regarding KDD’s can be found at this link:

<http://www.proceduresonline.com/llr/childcare/leicestershire/user_controlled_lcms_area/uploaded_files/PROCEDURE%20-%20Leicestershire%20Supervision%20Procedure%20%20Bottom%20Lines%20updatedec22.docx>

If an SGO is deemed appropriate for the child at the KDD, the decision requires ratification at the child’s next Review of Arrangements (ROA) meeting.

Should a case require further work with the carer and child’s extended family, the SGO assessment worker, child’s social worker and supervising social worker identify what is required to progress the case and update the child’s trajectory which is re-submitted to be heard at the SGO Review Group. Depending on timescales identified with the family, the SGO Review Group will identify a future date the case can be reviewed.

The SGO assessment worker is responsible for completing the assessment of carers and completing the SGO support plan for the child/ren. They are responsible for submitting these reports to our legal department along with a statement addressing why an SGO is deemed to be in the child’s best interest. The SGO assessment worker will also arrange and chair Family Network meetings and complete cultural genograms with those involved in the child’s life.

Principles of Financial Support- (Flow Chart Appendix B)

A financial assessment can be completed with a child’s carers once it has been agreed an SGO is the most appropriate order for the child. Leicestershire’s procedures for SGO allowances can be found at this link:-

<http://www.proceduresonline.com/llr/childcare/leicestershire/user_controlled_lcms_area/uploaded_files/%28x%29%20NEW%20march2020%20SGO%20CAO%20allowances%20agreed%20by%20SMT%20Final%20v2.pdf>

The local authority is committed to placing the child at the centre of decision making and do so by ensuring their carers are able to meet their basic and more complex needs. If it is determined that a child’s needs cannot be solely met with the assistance provided by the financial assessment, the SGO assessment worker will complete a needs-led assessment (Appendix C)

The needs-led assessment will cover the following factors: -

* What are the child/ren’s needs currently, what are their needs in the medium term and what are their needs in the long term
* How are carers able to meet their needs currently, in the medium term and in the long term
* How will the funding support the needs being met (eg. Less working hours to be available for child, support with additional appointments, specialist activities)

Once the needs-led assessment has been completed by the SGO assessment worker, the form is submitted to the SGO Review Group for consideration at sgopanel@leics.gov.uk The SGO assessment worker and the child’s social worker will attend the panel so that they can answer any questions the review group may have about the assessment.

If further funding is agreed for the child’s carers, the chair of the SGO Review Group will make an initial recommendation. The needs-led assessment and decision in principle is then submitted to the Head of Service and then Assistant Director for a final decision. Should the Head of Service disagree with the recommendation a view will be sought from another Head of Service for validation.

If there is a funding request for a grant/loan ( eg building works/ car purchase) a referral form is sent by the child’s social worker to CFS Permanence. A date is then arranged for the request to be heard at Permanence Panel. If the funding is agreed, the chair will make an initial recommendation and dependent on the amount being requested, be sent to the Head of Service for requests under £10,000, the Assistant Director for requests between £10,000 - £20,000 and Director for requests over £20,000. Requests for amounts over £10,000 are submitted to DMT for approval. If a contract is required to obtain the funding agreed, the child’s social worker and the carers supervising social worker should contact Duty.Solicitor@leics.gov.uk for a contract to be drawn up. In this instance carers need to be advised to seek their own legal advice in relation to the contract.

When financial agreements have been signed off by the final decision maker, the Finance Agreement form (Appendix D) is added to mosaic and sent to CFS Permanence to be added to the finance tracker.

**Appendix A**

SGO Review Group Flow Chart (Pathway 2)

RAG Rate Cases

Allocation to SGO Assessment Team

Further work required by

SGO Assessment Team/ CSW/ SSW to be captured in Trajectory

Senior Practitioners SGO Assessment Team

Initial assessment with CSW, SSW, Carer

Red

Amber

Yellow

Green

No

Don’t Progress discussions on SGO

Review Date to return to SGO Review Group

SGO Review Group

Representation: CIC SM (Chair), ASM Fostering, TM Fostering, IRO, Virtual School Head, CSW, TM, SSW

Definitive Yes for Progression of SGO

Trajectory to be completed

Yes

Progress discussion on SGO

Key Decision Discussion – Legal oversight

Following further work Decision not to progress

ROA : Ratification of Decision to progress SGO

SGO requiring decision on Financial Package – Needs Assessment to be presented to SGO Review Group – Finance Process to be implemented for sign off

**Appendix B**

Flow Chart for Financial Requests

**Additional Funding Request – Grant/ Loan** eg. House extension car purchase

**Additional Funding Request** – eg. Therapy

**SGO Allowance request** – over financial assessment identified amount

Finance agreement Sign off Document to be completed added to mosaic and send to CFS Permanence to be added to the finance tracker

Final decision to be made by Assistant Director

Final decision to be made by Head of Service

Initial recommendation to be made by Chair -

Attendance at SGO Review Group

Needs Led Assessment Form (Appendix A) to be completed and sent to the SGO Review Panel at sgopanel@leics.gov.uk

CSW and SSW to contact Duty.Solicitor@leics.gov.uk for contract. Carer to be advised to seek own legal advice in relation to the contract.

DMT Sign off for amounts over £10,000

Finance agreement Sign off Document to be completed. Uploaded to mosaic and send to CFS Permanence to be added to finance tracker

Director Agreement requests over £20,000

AD agreement request £10,000-£20,000

HOS agreement requests under £10,000

Initial recommendation to be made by Chair -

Attendance at Permanence Panel

Referral Form – Appendix B to be sent to CFS Permanence

**Appendix C**

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| **NEEDS ASSESMENT – Post-SGO Funding Request** |
| **Worker completing assessment:** **Date:**  |
| **Child/Young Person****Name:** **Mosaic ID:** **DOB:** **Carer(s)****Name:**  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Purpose of/reason for management oversight****Financial Request** |
| **Needs Assessment****Past Harm/Reason for becoming Looked After****Identity** *Description of child/young person’s identity needs and what is required from the carer(s) to meet these needs now and in the future.***Health** *Description of child/young person’s health needs and what is required from the carer(s) to meet these needs now and in the future.***Education** *Description of child/young person’s educational needs and what is required from the carer(s) to meet these needs now and in the future.***Social, Emotional and Behavioural development** *Description of child/young person’s social, emotional and behavioural needs and what is required from the carer(s) to meet these needs now and in the future.***Family Relationships and Contact** **What is required from carer(s)?** |
| **Child’s Voice**  |
| **Decision** |
| **Actions** |

**Appendix D**

**Financial Agreement Sign off Process**

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| **Background /Reason for Decision / financial implications – SGO Allowance/Grant/ Loan** |
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| **Detail of any alternative options considered when making this decision**  |
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| **Background Documents** |
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| **Permanence Panel/ SGO Review Group – Overview and recommendation : Grant/ Loan/ SGO allowance** |
| Amount: Overview and recommendation Signed: Date: |

|  |
| --- |
| **Assistant Director– Overview and recommendation :** **Grant/ Loan/ SGO allowance** |
| Amount: Overview and recommendation Under £20,000 can be signed off by Assistant DirectorSigned:Date: |

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|  **Director– Overview and recommendation:** **Grant/ Loan/ SGO allowance**Over £20,000 to be signed off by Director |
| Officer Decision Record to be completed.  |

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**Officer Decision Record**

Decision Title:

Decision Maker:

Date of Decision:

Date decision

effective from:

Background/Reason

for Decision/

financial implications:

Detail of any

alternative options

considered when

making this

decision:

Officers consulted as

 part of decision:

Decision:

EHRIA

Implications.

Background

Documents

Signed…………………………………………………..

Date……………………………………………………..

**SGO REVIEW GROUP – FLOW CHART**

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