

Special Guardianship in Milton Keynes

Prepared by Special Guardianship Support Service

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What is a Special Guardianship Order?

A Special Guardianship Order (SGO) is a legal order made by a Family Court where a carer - usually a relative or family friend - is appointed as the permanent legal guardian of the child until they turn 18 years-old. The Special Guardian is granted parental responsibility for the child, which means that they can make all of the day-to-day decisions about the child's care - including education and healthcare, without having to consult or inform their birth parents or the local authority. There are certain situations when Special Guardians are required to obtain permission from the child's birth parents, which include: - Taking the child out of the country for longer than three months. - Changing the child's surname. - Changing the child's religion. - Situations where consent from everyone with parental responsibility is required by law, such as certain medical procedures. - Placing the child up for adoption.

Working with Special Guardians and Children under SGO

Children can become cared for under SGOs for a variety of reasons. Some children may have been looked after by the local authority (in care) prior to the SGO being granted, or some may have been granted under private law arrangements. In all cases, the child is not able to live with their birth parent(s). The child may have experienced abuse and neglect, their parent(s) may be deceased, or it may not be safe to them to live with their parent(s). As a result, it is essential to adopt a trauma-informed approach when working with Special Guardians and the children in their care.

Important Considerations for Special Guardianship Families

You may wish to see a copy of the court order to confirm the details of when the SGO was granted and who is named as the Special Guardian.

- What does the child call their carer? How does the carer want to be referred to as in front of the child?
- Does the carer want you to communicate with the child's parents? If yes, when and how should this communication take place?

- Are there any additional court orders in place which stipulates or restricts the child's contact with their parent(s) or any other adult?
- Are there any issues between the Special Guardian and the child's parent(s) which you should be aware of?
- Are you aware of the child's past experiences and how this may affect their presentation and needs?
- Does the child have any additional needs which require specialist support?
- Does the child receive any support from the services, i.e. a Social Worker, Therapist?
- Was the child previously looked after by the local authority?
- When the SGO ends, who will be the child's next of kin?
- Has a 'testamentary guardian' been named/appointed?

The family may be entitled to additional support due to the SGO being in place, this may include financial support and therapeutic support.

For further information, please contact the SGO Support Service:

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Email: PostSGOSupport@milton-keynes.gov.uk