



## **Children and Young People's Services**

### **Special Guardianship Order (SGO)/Child Arrangement Order (CAO) Panels**

#### **Terms of Reference**

#### **SGO/CAO Panel (New Applications) & SGO/CAO Review Panel**

##### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Panels is:

- To provide management oversight and scrutiny where permanence is to be secured through SGO/CAO;
- To ensure a plan of permanence for SGO/CAO has been ratified at Looked After Review.
- To ensure the quality of information and the appropriate documentation is completed within given timescale and submitted to Panel;
- To ensure that proposals for support (including financial support) have both a purpose and rationale for both new applications, annual reviews and where representations have been submitted to review cases where support is due to or has ceased (appeals);
- To recommend the level and type of support (if any) to be offered by Children and Young People's Services or any other appropriate services from within the authority and via external partnerships.

**Consideration and approval of requests to fund legal costs (part/full) for prospective Special Guardians in relation to an application for Special Guardianship will be submitted to the appropriate Finance Panel.**

##### **OBJECTIVES**

The Panels will:

- Ensure there is compliance with Special Guardianship Regulations and the authority's policies and procedures.
- Ensure there is clarity about what the Panel is being asked to agree/review.
- Ensure both the quality of information and appropriate documentation is completed.
- Provide appropriate challenge to applications, reviews and requests.
- Provide a consistent approach to decision-making and a clear evidence-based rationale in consideration and approval of support.
- Identify any other appropriate support and services carers may access to meet the needs of children/young people in their care.
- Provide a system of allocating resources and ensuring the most effective use of budget resources are applied in supporting SGO/CAO placements.

- Ensure that full details of all panel decision-making (including the rationale) is recorded and this is communicated back to the Social Worker/Team Manager and the prospective carer immediately after panel.

## QUALITY

- To ensure Team Manager approval has been provided prior to submission to panel and the appropriate documentation completed;
- To ensure detail and quality of information/documentation is appropriate prior to submission to court and it is within the appropriate timelines;
- To ensure plan of permanence has been ratified at Looked After Review for new SGO/CAO applications and a date is provided when plan was ratified;
- To ensure annual reviews are undertaken at the appropriate time and following representations from carers a further review is undertaken; To ensure the review document/support plan sets out clear rationale for on-going support to meet the assessed needs of the child/young person.

## DOCUMENTATION TO BE SUBMITTED TO PANEL (5 WORKING DAYS PRIOR TO PANEL DATE)

### NEW

### SGO/CAO Panel (New Applications)

NB: A Child Arrangement Order should only be submitted to panel where there is a request for financial support.

<b>Special Guardianship</b> In Proceedings	<b>Child Arrangement Order</b> In Proceedings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <a href="#">New Panel Application Checklist</a></li><li>- <b>Special Guardianship Assessment (Court Report)</b> – part of SGO Workflow Including 3 references (to be saved on ‘doc store’ – SGO folder)</li><li>- <b>Checks – DBS/Medicals</b> (to be saved on ‘doc store’ – SGO folder)</li><li>- <a href="#">Referral Form for Financial Support for Adoption / Special Guardianship / Child Arrangement Orders</a> (to be saved on ‘doc store’ – SGO folder)</li><li>- <b>Draft Support Plan (signed by PSG)</b> part of SGO Workflow</li><li>- <b>Any other supporting documentation</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <a href="#">New Panel Application Checklist</a></li><li>- <b>Final Statement</b></li><li>- <b>Post-Order Support Plan</b> (only where there is a proposal for on-going support) via LCS</li><li>- Any additional checks deemed appropriate</li><li>- <a href="#">Referral Form for Financial Support for Adoption / Special Guardianship / Child Arrangement Orders</a> (to be saved on ‘doc store’)</li></ul>

## **POST-ORDER SUPPORT**

### **SGO/CAO Review Panel**

**(Annual Reviews/Requests for further review following an Appeal)**

<b>Special Guardianship</b>	<b>Child Arrangement Order</b>
Post Order (including all support not just financial)	Post Order (including all support not just financial)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>Review Checklist</b></li><li>- <b>Previous Review Checklist</b></li><li>- <b>Letter</b> (request for change of support or support to continue – representation from carer- appeal)</li><li>- <b>Updated Support Plan</b> (where appropriate)</li><li>- <b>Financial Checklist</b> (providing full financial details of income/ expenditure)</li></ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <a href="#"><u>Referral Form for Financial Support for Adoption / Special Guardianship / Child Arrangement Orders</u></a> where appropriate</li><li>- <b>Any other supporting documentation</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>Review Checklist</b></li><li>- <b>Previous Review Checklist</b></li><li>- <b>Letter</b> (request for change of support or support to continue – representation from carer- appeal)</li><li>- <b>Updated Support Plan</b> (where appropriate)</li><li>- <b>Financial Checklist</b> (providing full financial details of income/expenditure)</li></ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <a href="#"><u>Referral Form for Financial Support for Adoption / Special Guardianship / Child Arrangement Orders</u></a> where appropriate</li><li>- <b>Any other supporting documentation</b></li></ul>

### **FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS**

Panel meetings will be held twice a month (dates are set for the remainder of the year a copy of which can be sought from Panel Administrator)

[sgoropanel@durham.gov.uk](mailto:sgoropanel@durham.gov.uk)

### **MEMBERSHIP OF THE PANELS**

#### **SGO/CAO PANEL (NEW APPLICATIONS) & SGO/CAO REVIEW PANEL**

<b>Role</b>
Strategic Manager (Chair)
Kinship Care & Support Manager (Presenting Officer at Review Panel)

Operations Manager (New Applications) (Hearing Officer at SGO/CAO Review Panel)
Review Officer (Both Panels)
Panel Administrator

## CLARITY OF ROLES

### ❖ Strategic Manager – Looked After & Permanence (Chair)

**This role will also provide a Lead Practitioner role in providing advice/information to teams outside of panel.**

- To provide management oversight and scrutiny in achieving permanency through SGO/CAO
- To ensure compliance with SGO Regulations and the local authority's policies and procedures;
- To ensure the quality of information and the appropriate documentation is provided;
- To ensure the timely submission of applications/documentation prior to court;
- To provide a consistent approach to decision-making and provision of support;
- To challenge/seek further clarity of information where appropriate;
- To seek legal advice where appropriate.
- To ensure appropriate decision-making and rationale is recorded and panel minutes approved.
- To ensure panel is quorate.

Only in exceptional circumstances will an application/review be considered outside of Panel. This will require Operations Manager approval and still need to be considered by Chair/Kinship Care & Support Manager and/or Principal Social Worker.

### ❖ Kinship Care & Support Manager

**This role will also provide advice/information regarding authority's Policy & Procedures and support (including financial support).**

- To provide management oversight and scrutiny in quality of information and appropriate documentation;
- To ensure compliance with SGO Regulations and the local authority's policies and procedures;
- To provide a consistent approach to decision-making and provision of support;
- To identify options to seek further support and services;
- To challenge/seek further clarity in respect of eligibility to support and assessed needs;
- To seek legal advice where appropriate;

- To ensure appropriate decision-making and rationale is recorded and panel minutes approved.

In addition, the Manager will also be a Presenting Officer at the SGO/CAO Review Panel.

#### ❖ **Operations Manager (via rota)**

**(Operations Manager, Families First North will also undertake a Lead Practitioner Role in providing advice/information to teams outside of panel and will also be the Hearing Officer at the SGO/CAO Review Panel.)**

- To provide management oversight in practice and quality of information/documentation submitted to panel;
- To ensure compliance with SGO Regulations and the local authority's policies and procedures;
- To ensure a consistent approach to decision-making and provision of support to meet the needs of children/young people;
- To challenge/seek further clarity of information where appropriate;
- To provide feedback to teams/Operational Group regarding quality of good/poor documentation;

#### ❖ **Review Officers**

- To provide information/advice regarding support and services which may be accessed and support progression;
- To ensure financial details presented to panel in respect of benefits claimed are accurate and identify future eligibility to other benefits/grants;
- To seek further information via CIS/Apollo where deemed appropriate prior to panel (awaiting finance agreement)

#### ❖ **Panel Administrator:**

- To collate all new/review applications and documentation and ensure all appropriate information has been submitted and duly signed by appropriate managers. (Where there is missing documentation a request will be made for this to be submitted prior to panel and recorded on agenda). Agenda to list all submissions within timeline (5 days prior to panel) and also late requests (which may need to be re-submitted to next panel) and deferred cases from previous panel ensuring all documentation is provided.
- Provide an agenda setting out new applications/review applications for both panels.
- Maintain a tracker to identify all submitted applications/documentation and to chase up missing documentation, escalating to senior managers where necessary.
- Following New Application Panel to complete New Application Checklist with panel decisions and seek Chair's signature. Return completed Checklist to the Social Worker/Team Manager, sending a copy of all decisions to Financial Payments Team. **(Social Workers must also ensure that 'Children's Finance Form' is completed on LCS to progress payments)**
- To record all decisions on LCS following Panel. (Review Officers will complete agenda outcomes for review panel and send to panel administrator)

## ❖ **TIMESCALES**

- Monthly dates are arranged throughout the year for panels.
- All documentation must be submitted to [sgopanel@durham.gov.uk](mailto:sgopanel@durham.gov.uk) **5 working days** prior to panel;
- Panel Administrator will ensure all appropriate documentation is received and will request further documentation where deemed necessary prior to panel;
- Where this documentation is not received this will be noted on agenda;
- **Where documentation has not been received applications will be deferred to next appropriate panel.**
- Social Workers must be available during Panel (or identify a representative) to respond to any questions or issues of Panel.
- Timescales for Special Guardianship Assessment of the proposed applicants is 12 weeks. (In exceptional circumstances it may not be possible to complete the assessment in the 12 weeks and in these circumstances Court permission to extend the timetable will be required by application.)

**NB: For a Financial Assessment to be undertaken within the timescale for court/submission to Panel please allow 6/8 weeks for a financial request to be completed and returned.**

Following Panel please ensure that you complete the appropriate Children and Young People's Services Payment Form (found in 'forms' on LCS) and submit – this will automatically progress to Children and Young People's Services Finance work tray to progress payments.

For further information please refer to

- [Early Permanence Planning Strategy](#);
- [Decision to Look After and Care Planning Procedure](#);
- [Applications for Special Guardianship Orders Procedure](#) / [Support Services Policy \(Local Resources, All Children\)](#).