

# One minute guide



## A Guide to Special Guardianship Order (SGO)

North Yorkshire County Council is committed to supporting the best outcomes for looked after children and promoting permanence. Research shows that the most stable and beneficial placements are with long term carers where children know their carers are committed to bringing them up into adulthood, they are able to put down roots and concentrate on other aspects of their lives.

### **What is Special Guardianship?**

When a carer becomes a child's Special Guardian, they share legal responsibility for the child with the child's parents, but are able to make day-to-day decisions about their care without having to consult anyone else. These include where the child will live or where they go to school.

A special Guardianship Order lasts until the child is 18 years old.

### **What are the advantages of a Special Guardianship Order?**

For the carer, a Special Guardianship Order makes the care arrangements more legally sure than a child arrangement order and enables the child to maintain stronger links with their birth family than if they were adopted. It also allows carers to have more control over decisions about the child's care, although parents retain some rights and responsibilities.

For older children, Special Guardianship Orders can strike the balance between their need for a safe, stable, caring home throughout their childhood and maintaining strong links with their parents. Under a Special Guardianship Order, the child is not looked after by the local authority and carers can make all the day to day decisions. This will give you more freedom to raise the child without having additional duties such as attending regular review meetings, annual health need assessments, form filling and having regular social work visits.

### **Support**

If a child was looked after before the Special Guardianship Order was made, we have a duty to assess the needs of:

- The child
- The Special Guardian
- The child's parents

After this assessment, we will look at what support we can offer to help the care arrangements run smoothly.

Support can include:

- Mediation between the child's parents and the Special Guardian
- Counselling, advice and information
- Access to support groups

### **Financial Support**

Where carers are applying for a Special Guardianship Order as an alternative to remaining on or being placed on a Care Order, the Children and Families service will undertake a means-tested assessment using the Department for Education's recommended means test calculation. This means a carer may continue to receive up to the weekly allowance (equivalent to the age-related fostering allowance), minus Child Benefit (as an application can then be made for this). Where the carer is a former foster carer for the child, the fostering allowance will be 'protected' for a two-year period to recognise the transitional period. It is a condition of on-going payments to carers that financial circumstances are reviewed annually. This review may include a face-to-face visit or may be undertaken via remote/virtual means. Payments to carers will usually cease when the child reaches age 18 or if any of the terms of the agreement have not been met.

### **Contact us**

Online: [northyorks.gov.uk/contact-us](https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/contact-us)

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