



THE ROLE OF SPECIAL GUARDIANS

What is the Background?

Special Guardianship Orders are for children who cannot live with their birth parents. They give Special Guardians parental responsibility which they can exercise to the exclusion of others.

Special Guardianship Orders are often granted to family members, friends, connected others and sometimes former foster carers.

Are Special Guardians Professionals?

No. Special Guardians are not doing a job for the local authority and professionals should treat Special Guardians in the same way as parental carers rather than as carers doing a job for a local authority.

What Effect Does it Have?

- Parents retain parental responsibility (but are restricted in the way they can exercise it)
- Gives clear responsibility for all aspects of caring for a child and for taking the decisions to do with their upbringing.
- **A child subject to a special guardianship order is no longer looked after by a local authority.**

What Support Services Exist?

- WCC has an SGO team who provide support
- Special Guardians can also access an SGO support grant
- Special Guardians may also be supported through the Early Help process

What is the Impact on Decisions About the Child?

Special Guardians make all decisions in relation to day-to-day care. This may include, for instance, where a child should go to school, whether and how a child should have contact with their parents and whether a child can have overnight sleepovers with school friends.

What Other Involvement May There Be?

In some cases, a Supervision Order is made by the court at the same time as a SGO to support the family. These place a duty on a local authority to advise, assist and befriend a child and lasts for a maximum of 1 year; 3 years if renewed.

In some instances, children may be subject to Child in Need or Child Protection plans.

What are the Limitations?

Written consent of every person with parental responsibility or leave of the court must be given to:

- Cause the child to be known by a different surname;
- Remove the child from the UK for more than 3 months
- Consent to the child being adopted; or
- Change a child's religion.