



Special Guardianship Orders

Information for birth parents



Staffordshire
County Council

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What is a Special Guardianship Order and what does it mean for me?

A Special Guardianship Order (SGO) is an order made in the family court under the Children Act 1989. If an order is made, it means the court has decided your child can't live with you permanently. They will live with the special guardian until they turn 18.

It's different to adoption because it's not a lifelong order and it doesn't legally end a child's relationship with their birth family.

However, it is a long-term order that gives the special guardian overall parental responsibility. This means they have the final say on decisions about the child's upbringing, if any disagreement happens between you.

Special guardians must be over the age of 18 and should have an existing – or possible – relationship with your child.

This could be:

- | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ■ Grandparents | ■ Brother or sister | ■ Unrelated foster carer |
| ■ Aunt or uncle | | |
| ■ Family friend | ■ Other relative | ■ Neighbour |

It's important to note that if your child lives with a special guardian, they are not looked after by Staffordshire County Council.

Parental responsibility and Special Guardianship Orders

When a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) is made, it gives the special guardian parental responsibility.

If you have parental responsibility for a child, you legally have to:



Give them a home



Protect and direct them



Decide where they go to school



Agree to any medical treatment

The special guardian will have responsibility for the day-to-day care and decision making for your child. If there's any conflict between you and the special guardian, their decision will override yours.

You do keep some parental responsibility as the birth parent and some decisions can't be made without your permission. Sometimes the court may give their permission, if you refuse.

This includes:

- **Taking your child out of the country for more than three months**
- **Changing your child's surname**
- **Giving permission for your child to be placed for adoption.**

Special guardianship support

If a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) is made by the court, there will be a support plan in place. This tells the special guardian and your child how Staffordshire County Council can help after the order is made.

Support may include financial help for the special guardian, advice about how much time your child should spend with you and how they can best help your child to understand their life story.

The support plan will be looked at every year in the special guardianship post-order team and if any further support is needed they will meet with the special guardian and your child to talk to them about this.

Where possible, you can be involved in this process directly or share your views separately.

Contact us

We understand that when a legal order is made about your child, it's not always easy to understand what it means for you and your family.

If you have any questions about special guardianship or Special Guardianship Orders, please get in touch with our Special Guardianship Post Order Duty Team on:

Call: 01785 895 950

(Monday to Thursday, 8.30am to 5pm or Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm)

Email: sgosupportteam@staffordshire.gov.uk