



## **Children's Safeguarding and Family Help Special Guardianship Orders procedures and practice guidance**

Camden's Children and Learning Directorate uses relational practice as the foundation for all our work. Our integrative relational practice framework is based on our values, and is designed to help achieve the Directorate's purpose: to work with children, families and communities to make a positive, lasting difference to their futures, so they have the best start in life.

We recognise the impact of structural inequalities on the lives of the children and families we work with and as a service we will embrace inclusive, anti-discriminatory and anti-racist practice based on our values and our mission to champion social justice.

Our practice framework centres on honest and compassionate relationships with those we serve and with each other. It is an expectation that all Directorate policies and procedures are implemented in line with our practice framework, and that any actions within policies and procedures reflect its ethics, values and practice expectations.

## 1 Introduction

This document sets out the local procedures relating to applications for Special Guardianship orders and should be read together with the *Applications for Special Guardianship Orders* policy. [Contents](#)

## 2 Roles and responsibilities

- Camden has a duty to provide a special guardianship service which covers;
  - assessing applicants for special guardianship orders and assessing the child, to ascertain their wishes and feelings, and reporting to the court on the applicant's suitability to be the child's special guardian.
  - providing support services to all those affected by special guardianship orders who live in the borough, including the child, the special guardian and the child's parents.
- The Family, Friends and Fostering service has overall responsibility for special guardianship services, and all notices of applications for special guardianship orders will be sent to the service in the first instance. The Family, Friends and Fostering manager will then notify other teams who need to be involved in the assessment process, and the Business Support Officer who is responsible for carrying out checks on all prospective special guardians.
- The Family, Friends and Fostering service is also responsible for assessing the support needs of the prospective special guardian and the child. Family, Friends and Fostering team managers will oversee assessments and provide advice to social work practitioners undertaking the assessments.
- In most cases, the child who is the subject of the application will already be known to CSFH, and many of the prospective special guardians may be caring for the child as a kinship foster carer. Equally, families who are currently working with CSFH may approach social workers about special guardianship orders, for example following a Family Group Conference or when a child becomes looked after.
- CSFH social workers and Family, Friends and Fostering social workers should provide families and carers with as much information as possible about special guardianship orders so that they are able to make an informed decision about whether to apply.
- If the child is subject to a care order, the Corporate Parenting Head of Service must consent to any application for a special guardianship order being made.

- Social workers in the Family, Friends and Fostering service are responsible for assessing prospective special guardians.
- The child's allocated social worker is responsible for carrying out an assessment of the child and their family to ascertain their wishes and feelings, and to identify their needs. CSFH social workers will work jointly with Family, Friends and Fostering social workers to prepare the court report.

### 3 Assessment

- Prospective special guardians, the child and the child's family should be assessed using the special guardian assessment form (See Appendix 1). This assessment form is based on the schedule of information required by the court when making a decision on an application.
- Sections 1-3 of the assessment (information on the child, the birth family and their wishes and feelings) should be completed by the child's social worker.
- Sections 4-10 (information on the prospective special guardian and recommendations) should be completed by the Family, Friends and Fostering social worker.
- The timescale for preparing the report in private applications is 3 months from the date of notification and 3 months from the date a positive viability assessment is completed in care proceedings. It is vital the child's social worker works jointly with the APT or fostering social worker who is assessing the prospective special guardian and that information on assessments is shared.
- The Family, Friends and Fostering social worker and their team manager should meet within 2 weeks of starting the assessment, and then 6- 8 weeks at the midway point to discuss progress of the assessments. A final meeting should be held around 10 weeks to consider the needs of the family if the assessment is looking positive in order to formulate the SGO support plan. These meetings should be chaired by the Family, Friends and Fostering service manager.
- Assessments of need for support services should be carried out at the same time as the general assessment and a summary of the support services plan included in the court report. Please see under "Assessment for support services" for details on how this assessment is to be carried out.

#### 4 Assessment of prospective special guardians

- As prospective special guardians will already be known to the child, and could already be caring for them, their assessment will be different in context to assessments of foster carers or adopters. Assessments should focus on the prospective special guardian's relationship with the child, and their ability to meet the child's needs, in a manner that is supportive and builds on their strengths. Research shows that family and friends carers often resent overly intrusive assessments of their care.
- The assessment should follow the headings found in sections 4-6 of the special guardianship assessment form; the information required includes personal information about the prospective special guardian and their family and circumstances, as well as information about their relationship with the child, and their suitability to care for the child.
- Foster carers who are applying for a special guardianship order in relation to the child they are currently caring for will be assessed by their fostering supervisory worker. The assessment will be based on the information from their Form F2.
- The assessment of a prospective special guardian needs to include full checks being carried out on the applicant, members of their household and regular visitors to their household who are over 16 years old. The checks are the same as those carried out for prospective adopters, and include police checks, local authority checks and health checks.
- The assessing Family, Friends and Fostering social worker is responsible for sending out consent forms for the checks to prospective special guardians. When completed consent forms are returned, the Business Support Officer should make arrangements for the checks to be carried out.
- All prospective special guardians should have a medical assessment undertaken by their GP using BAAF form AH1. These forms are available from the Business Support Officer. The social worker carrying out the assessment is responsible for ensuring that the form is sent to the prospective special guardian, together with instructions to their GP for its return.
- If the prospective special guardian has recently had a medical assessment, ie: a foster carer who has recently been assessed as a foster carer, the Council's medical officer may advise that the earlier medical assessment will be sufficient.

## 5 Assessment of the child and their family

- The assessment should follow the headings found in sections 1-3 of the special guardianship assessment form; the headings include personal information on the child, their birth parents and siblings, their wishes and feelings regarding the special guardianship order, and information on the child's needs, which is based on the domains found in the Assessment Framework.
- If the child has an allocated social worker, they should carry out the assessment of the child, using any information from recent previous assessments, ie: child and family assessments and plans. Information on the child's identified needs should also be used to inform the assessment of support needs.
- If the child is not known to CSFH, the assessing Family, Friends and Fostering social worker should complete parts 1-3 unless there are safeguarding concerns and a child and family assessment needs to be carried out outside of the SGO assessment framework.
- For all assessments, it is essential that the process involves meeting with the child and their parents so that up-to-date information is obtained and that the assessment is focussed on the child's needs in the context of the prospective care arrangement, and the child's and parents wishes and feelings about this.

## 6 Recommendations

- When all assessments have been carried out, the second joint meeting should be held to finalise the report, decide on a recommendation to the court, and agree what support services should be provided. In the event that there is disagreement, the matter should be referred to the Heads of Service for CIN and Corporate Parenting.
- The completed assessments should be produced by the Family, Friends and Fostering social worker and signed by both assessing social workers. The Family, Friends and Fostering social worker is responsible for liaising with Legal Services to arrange for the report to be filed with the court.

## 7 Applying to the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund

- The ASGSF has been set up to provide funding to meet the therapeutic needs of children who are moving into permanent alternative care arrangements in order to support the arrangement.
- The funding is available to children who have been adopted, including children who:

- are living (placed) with a family in England while waiting for adoption
  - were adopted from local authority care in England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland and live in England
  - were adopted from abroad and live in England with a recognised adoption status
  - were in care immediately before a SGO was made
  - left care under a special guardianship order which subsequently was changed to an adoption order, or vice versa
  - are under a residency order or child arrangement order (CAO) and were previously looked after
  - were previously looked after but where the adoption, special guardianship, residency or CAO placement has broken down, irrespective of any reconciliation plans
- The purpose of the ASGSF is to provide extra funding over and above statutory adoption and special guardianship support where the child is displaying worrying behaviours and need therapeutic input in order to address their underlying issues.
  - Applications for funding must come from local authorities on behalf of families and for the first three years after the adoption order is made, the responsible local authority will be the authority who placed the child for adoption. After that, the local authority where the child resides will be responsible for making the application.
  - Requests from families for support should be dealt with by the Family, Friends and Fostering Service. The special guardianship support social worker will carry out an assessment of the child's therapeutic needs and where specific needs for therapy are identified in the assessment, will complete the application to the ASGSF, identifying the most appropriate resource.
  - Where it is thought to be necessary, the social worker can also make an application for funding to carry out a specialist assessment, for example by the Portman or the Tavistock clinic.
  - Social workers should be aware that funding available is capped at £2,500 per child per annum for a specialist assessment and £5,000 per child per annum for therapy. Funding is only made available on assessments that have been carried out within 3 months of the application being made and the ASGSF aims to process applications within 20 working days.

Further details of the fund, including what services can be funded and a list of potential providers is available at: [Adoption Support Fund, UK Website > Home](#)

## 8 Access to leaving care services

Children who were Looked After by Camden immediately before a special guardianship order was made may also qualify for advice and assistance from the Leaving Care team as a qualifying young person if:

- they are aged 16-17 years and are the subject of a special guardianship order
- or**
- They are 18 -21 years and were the subject of a special guardianship order when they reached 18 years
- and**
- They were looked after by Camden immediately before the special guardianship order was made.