



# SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP WELCOME AND INFORMATION PACK





<b>SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP WELCOME AND INFORMATION PACK</b> .....	1
The Special Guardianship Support Team .....	3
What is Special Guardianship? .....	4
Special Guardianship Support .....	7
National Support Available .....	13
The Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF) .....	14
Education .....	15
Information for Birth Parents .....	18
Further Information and Useful Organisations.....	21
Advocacy/Complaints Procedure.....	23
Glossary of Terms.....	24



## The Special Guardianship Support Team

The Special Guardianship Support Team is based at B Bond, Smeaton Road, Bristol, BS1 6XN.

**The team is made up of a Team Manager, 4 Social Workers, 2 Family Support Workers, a Children's Social Care Assistant and a Finance and Benefits Worker.**

If you require support, then please do not hesitate to contact one of the team.

You can email us at [special.guardianship@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:special.guardianship@bristol.gov.uk) or phone the Special Guardianship telephone number **Monday to Friday, 8:30am – 5pm on 0117 357 6319** and our Children's Social Care Assistant will be able to assist. Alternatively, the Kinship and Fostering duty line is available during these hours on **0117 3534196**.

A member of the team will be able to complete an assessment to determine the service/support required by the Special Guardian and their family and put together an appropriate plan.

Support can consist of: parenting support; advice and signposting; help dealing with other organisations/professionals; therapeutic services; training and support groups; events; services to support family time with birth parents/family; help with finances and Special Guardianship Allowance.

We will also keep in touch with you by sending out a monthly newsletter. Please let us know if you aren't receiving these and we will make sure you are added to our list.



## What is Special Guardianship?

Special Guardianship is a legal court order which places a child or young person with someone permanently and gives that person parental responsibility for the child. This could be a grandparent, close relative, or a family friend.

Special Guardianship means that the child lives with carers who have parental responsibility for them until they are grown up. The order lasts until the child is 18 years old, unless the order is discharged by a court or the Special Guardian dies.

A Special Guardianship Order also means that there will probably be some form of direct contact between the child and their parent(s), who also retain Parental Responsibility.

## Why Special Guardianship?

Special Guardianship is commonly chosen by the courts for the children who cannot live with their birth parents.

- It gives a child the security of a permanent home, directs where a child should live and who with
- The child's birth parents retain shared parental responsibility with the Special Guardian.
- It allows the Special Guardian to make day-to-day decisions for the child (jointly, if there is more than one Special Guardian)

Unlike adoption, a Special Guardianship Order will not remove parental responsibility from the child's birth parents. This means that the Special Guardian will have responsibility for the day-to-day decisions as well as all of the important decisions about the child or young person but will need to consult the child's birth parents about certain legal decisions such as changing the child's name by law.



## **What decisions can you make for the child you care for?**

As a special guardian, you can make all the important decisions about the child you are caring for until they reach 18 years old. You share parental responsibility with the child's birth parents but have the majority share so you can make almost all decisions without the need for parents agreement.

As the child's primary carer, you are responsible for all aspects of their wellbeing. You are expected to provide a safe home for them, protect and care for them, promote health and emotional wellbeing, choose their school, support school attendance, and ensure they receive appropriate medical or dental treatment including immunisations.

## **What decisions can't you make for the child you care for?**

There are a limited number of areas where you are required to obtain permissions from the child's birth parents.

These are:

- Taking the child out of the country for longer than three months
- Changing the child's surname legally
- Changing the child's religion
- Placing the child for adoption

If you are considering any of the steps above, you must ensure you have the birth parents' consent or permission from the court.

## **What are your legal rights around birth family contact?**

Contact arrangements can be clearly outlined for some special guardians as part of their SGO agreement while others are expected to make informal arrangements themselves. Contact is often referred to as Family Time and should always be decided based on what is in the child's best interests. The court can order Family Time between a child and their birth family even if you think it is not in their best interest. If this decision is made you must ensure Family Time takes place. However, if you believe time with parents is causing the child distress and is affecting the child negatively you can challenge this in court but would need to be able to provide relevant evidence.



It is important for you to encourage Family Time. You cannot force your child to attend but it is important to recognise the value of having some form of contact arrangement between the child and their birth parents. If contact arrangements have not been fixed in a court order you have the authority to decide them yourself, and we advise that this is done collaboratively with the parent or family member involved, having considered the child's wishes and feelings. If there is disagreement a birth parent can challenge the arrangements by applying to the court and allowing them to decide. The court's main concern will be the child's welfare and contact will only be changed if it is in the child's best interests.

There are options available to resolve disputes regarding Family Time before disagreements escalate to court. Birth parents and special guardians can attempt to resolve their problems by asking a social worker to intervene or by attending family mediation.

As a service we recommend a Family Time Agreement is made and drawn up as early as possible. When the adults are communicating well and in agreement with the arrangements Family Time for children can be a positive and happy experience. However, when things are not going well it can cause a lot of anxiety for all involved but especially for the child who can feel confused and worried. It is important to think as early as possible about how you would like Family Time to take place and what will work best for the child at the age they are now. You can view a [template for a Family Time Agreement](#), this can be created by yourself, but the team can also provide support if you require.

## **Under what circumstances can an SGO end?**

There must be a significant change in circumstances for a court to end an SGO. An SGO can be ended by...

- An application being made to court by the special guardian to end an SGO;
- anyone who has a Child Arrangement Order in place since the SGO was granted;
- or by the local authority where a Care Order has been applied for since the SGO was granted.

A child's parents must first apply to the court for permission to make an application to court for a change or ending of the SGO.

A SGO can also end on the death of a special guardian unless the order was made jointly with another special guardian and one survives. Special guardians can appoint in their will a testamentary guardian, this is a person who is willing to care for



the child in the event of their death. Testamentary guardians have an equal amount of parental responsibility to birth parents, so it is not the same as being a special guardian. Any disagreements between testamentary guardians and birth parents, about where the child lives will need to be resolved in court. Testamentary guardians are also not entitled to the same support services as special guardians but can apply to children's services in the same way as any parent can.

It is recommended that all special guardians appoint a Testamentary Guardian as soon as possible. This can be done with the support of a solicitor, the following service can also give advice... [Testamentary guardianship - Kinship Compass](#).

## Special Guardianship Support

*This section contains information about the support you and the child(ren) you are for caring for are entitled to and how you can access it. Below are answers to some common enquiries...*

### Can I access the SGO support services?

Yes – if the child(ren) was in the care of the Local Authority in Bristol just before the SGO was granted (either under CA1989 section 20 or a Care Order).  
If the child(ren) was in the care of a different Local Authority immediately before the SGO was granted, that Local Authority should be contacted as they are responsible for assessing the SGO support needs for three years following the SGO being made.

### What if the child(ren) was not in care?

If the child was not in the care of the Local Authority, then you can make a request for SGO support, however it will be up to the Local Authority whether they decide to carry out an assessment as they do not have a duty to provide SGO support for the children who were not in their care.

### Can I ask for a review of the SGO Support plan?

Yes. Your child should have a Special Guardianship support plan which was created when you underwent your assessment, and the decision was made for the child to live with you. The support plan looks at the needs of the child in the following areas...

- Health



- Education
- Emotional and Behavioural Development
- Identity
- Family and Social Relationships
- Social Presentation
- Self-care skills
- Family Time arrangements
- Financial and practical arrangements

## **What will happen after the SGO support plan review?**

The review will look at what the needs for SGO support are. The Local Authority must then decide and should inform you what support they can offer.

## **What are SGO support services?**

SGO support is offered as it is recognised there is a need for additional help where there is an SGO arrangement, often due to the experiences of the child prior to them living with their Special Guardian. The support offer in Bristol includes providing groups and training for Special Guardians, family support work such as helping build routines with the child, therapeutic work, managing family time, support with school and education, signposting and helping carers and children access community resources, and financial support. You could also benefit from accessing other services offered to all Bristol families by the Local Authority such as Child in Need Services or Disability Services. We can support you to make a self-referral for other services, but it will be the decision of that team or organisation if they will offer any support.

## **What kind of support is available?**

### **Parenting support for special guardians**

Parenting support can be provided on an individual or group basis depending on the needs of the family. The parenting techniques that we recommend are usually directed at helping look after children affected by early trauma and attachment difficulties. Our Family support workers are able to help carers with developing routines and boundaries with their children, whilst our social workers are able to offer training around childhood trauma and attachment as well as provide sessions with carers to help with their understanding around how the child's needs may differ from the carers usual experience of parenting.



## **Advice on issues about special guardianship**

This could be advice in relation to what it means to have an SGO. However, the team might not be able to give the appropriate advice, e.g. legal advice for which we will re-direct people to legally trained professionals who will be in a better position to respond.

## **Consultation and Advocacy with other agencies, for example schools and health professionals**

In some cases, we can help children and special guardians in working with schools or health professionals to make sure that support services provided to the child and the family are consistent and joint up. This could be attending school meetings or health meetings, liaising with professionals where a disagreement may have arisen, holding a TAF (team around the family) meeting, supporting young people to have a voice and feel they are being listened to by the adults making decisions in their lives. We have a strong link with the HOPE virtual school and have regular consultations with their P-LAC (previously looked after) practitioner to access guidance and advice.

## **Therapeutic services**

The need for therapy, either for the family or for the child, is identified by one of our social workers completing an assessment. If a need is identified and this is something the family and child feel they can engage in, we can access a number of therapeutic interventions. Most of the therapeutic packages are provided by independent therapists commissioned by the team and funded by the Adoption Support Fund (where the criteria's met, see page12).

The therapeutic interventions can be Theraplay, Early childhood trauma and attachment work, Psychotherapy, Family Therapy, NVR (non-violent resistance), therapeutic parenting, life story work, VIG (video intensive guidance) amongst others and are tailored to the child's needs.

## **A wide range of services supporting Family Time / contact arrangements**

Family Time support services can vary, depending on the children's needs. The SGO team can carry out an assessment of the child's needs in relation to seeing their parent or family member, this is completed by one of our social workers. This will include direct work with the child as well as gathering the special guardians and the parents' view on contact. The team can help the special guardians and the parents to draw up a written family time agreement, this is not a legally binding document but can assist to have everyone's views recorded and create a plan for everyone to work from. Some can hold regular reviews and can sometimes offer



short term support supervising family time alongside a safe family member who will take on this role in the long term. As a service we can only make recommendations around Family Time, if an agreement can't be reached or a more formal agreement is needed then families will need to access independent Mediation or apply to court. Alternatively Family Time can be agreed by the court and families can access family mediation services and guidance from CAFCASS.

When birth parents approach the team asking to make contact with their child(ren), we will let the special guardians know the request has been made and discuss their options. If the special guardians do not wish to proceed with having communication or contact with the parent, we will advise the parents to seek legal advice so they can explore their options.

### **Support groups and Events**

We run regular support groups in informal settings such as libraries and community centres. The Support Group provides the opportunity to meet with the team and other Special Guardians over coffee and refreshments. The Support Group will have occasional guest speakers who will deliver talks on relevant topics, provide up to date information and training opportunities, as well as offer guidance and support. If you would like to participate, please let us know or look out for the details in the Newsletter and just come along. Everyone is welcome and we regularly receive positive feedback from carers who have built friendships and support networks through attending the groups but who also have enjoyed the learning and information sharing which has aided them in the support of their child.

We also run family events throughout the year. These are at Easter, during the summer holidays and Halloween. These are fun events run by the team for the children, their carers, and families to get together, enjoy some fun and make new friends. We provide games, crafts and refreshments and try to create an informal and welcoming event which is accessible to all.

### **Access to training**

Bristol Special Guardianship Team offer a number of different training courses throughout the year, there is training available to SG carers which is also accessible to foster carers and is accessed via the Bristol Fostering training services at [fostercarertraining@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:fostercarertraining@bristol.gov.uk), there is also training run specifically for SG carers which are advertised in the Newsletter. They are a mix of face to face and online courses. Updated training lists are sent out with the monthly Newsletter. Please provide us with your email address to ensure that you do not miss any updates.

As a team we offer bespoke training for Special Guardians including Family Time training, Trauma and Attachment and Education support training.



Additional training can be accessed via FIF (Families in Focus) such as Parenting Courses and the team can help you identify these.

### **Parenting Support**

The team is able to offer some short-term parenting interventions such as how to set routines and boundaries, as well as how to understand behaviours as a form of communication and how to recognise behaviours in the context of early childhood trauma.

Some carers can access parenting support from Families in Focus and if the child is under 5 from the Children's Centres. The team can also signpost carers to voluntary groups and organisations.

### **Support for Children and Young People**

The team are also able to offer support to children and young people who live with special guardians. This may be in the form of 1:1 sessions to explore the young persons support needs; support with seeing parents and family members, support with school, support accessing groups and support services such as counselling or mentoring services.

### **Support for parents**

The team offer limited support to birth parents. The team can support parents make family time agreements/ arrangements with the special guardians and can signpost parents to specialist services. See parent information leaflet.

### **Financial Support**

Financial assistance can be provided as specified by Bristol SGO Policy, please see following link on Bristol City Council Website [Bristol SGO policy](#) or ask for a copy of the policy from a member of the team. Not all Special Guardians will be entitled to financial assistance under the current legislation. Some Special Guardians will be able to access a regular allowance paid to them for the care of the child. The aim of the allowance is to ensure that all the child's care needs are met, and the local authority are clear that the allowance is to pay for items and services for the child. Unfortunately, some Special Guardians will not qualify for this allowance.

The Special Guardianship Team has a Finance and Benefit worker who can be accessed by Special Guardians and can offer advice, guidance and financial reviews to all carers. If you would like to speak with our Finance and Benefit worker please call the Special Guardianship team on 0117 357 6319 or email [specialguardianshipFAB@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:specialguardianshipFAB@bristol.gov.uk)



## **Social Security Benefits**

Special Guardians may be entitled to a range of Universal Benefits. Advice about individual rights to benefits it is advisable to seek independent advice.

Possible Benefits:

- Working Tax Credits
- Child Benefit
- Child Tax Credits
- Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
- Carer's Allowance
- Guardians Allowance

Further Advice and information can be found:

[www.gov.uk/browse/childcare-parenting/financial-help-children](http://www.gov.uk/browse/childcare-parenting/financial-help-children)

## **Support Plan and Annual Review**

Following your Special Guardianship assessment you should have had a Support plan agreed and drawn up. This is a working document which changes with the development of the child and your family. The plan looks at what support the child needs to successfully live and grow in their Special Guardians family. It covers areas such as health, education, Family Time, emotional development, social and peer relationships etc.

Each year we will contact you for a yearly check in. This is an opportunity to review your support plan and financial support plan if you request it.

We look forward to working with you and will keep in touch with you. Remember, you can always call or email us whenever you need.



## **National Support Available**

*The following organisations can be useful sources of support and information:*

### **Kinship**

Kinship is the only national charity (England and Wales) dedicated to supporting kinship carers – grandparents and other relatives raising children who can't live with their parents. Their aim is for “kinship carers and the children they are raising to be recognised, valued and supported”. Their website is a good source of information and support, and you can also contact them directly.

[www.kinship.org.uk/](http://www.kinship.org.uk/)

### **Family Rights Group**

Offer advice/support to parents and carers about their rights and options when social workers or courts make decisions about their children's welfare. FRG can provide legal advice where a child is 'previously looked after'.

Freephone Number: 0808 801 0366  
(Monday to Friday, 9:30am to 3:00pm)

[www.frg.org.uk](http://www.frg.org.uk)

### **Coram Children's Legal Centre**

Coram Children's Legal Centre (CCLC) specialises in law and policy affecting children and young people. Lawyers and professionals, with experience in child law give free legal information, advice and representation to children, young people, their families, carers and professionals.

[Coram Children's Legal Centre - Home \(childrenslegalcentre.com\)](http://childrenslegalcentre.com)



# The Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF)

## The ASGSF for Special Guardianship

Most Children being raised under a Special Guardianship Order are entitled to funding from the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund. If your child is eligible, they must have been Looked After by the Local Authority when the SGO was made. Funding is currently available up to £5,000 per child for therapy and specialist assessment.

### How to apply

First, you need to request an assessment by contacting Bristol's Special Guardianship Team. We will discuss your child's needs with you and complete an assessment. If appropriate, we will make an application to the ASGSF on your behalf.

Where the assessment identifies that therapeutic services would be beneficial to your family, the Local Authority will apply to the ASGSF on your behalf. The Local Authority Social Worker will be expected to talk to you about who can provide the types of service that you need and which provider you would prefer.

The funding can be used for the following:

- Creative therapies e.g. art, music, drama, play therapy
- Extensive therapeutic life story work to help the young person understand and cope with their past trauma and difficulties
- Family therapy to build attachment and improve the relationship between you and your child
- Psychotherapy (or a talking therapy) for your child
- Sensory integration therapy/sensory attachment therapy
- Therapeutic Parenting training aimed at special guardians
- Therapeutic Short Breaks

The funding being applied for should help your child achieve the following positive outcomes:

- Improved relationships with friends, family members, teachers, and school staff
- Improved engagement with learning
- Improved emotional and behaviour management
- Improved confidence and ability to enjoy a positive family life and social relationships

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/adoption-support-fund-asf>

For more information on eligibility, please contact the SGO team.



## Education

### Choosing a school

When choosing a school it is helpful to look at the school website, view the most recent Ofsted report and of course visit the school. Ask yourself if this is an environment that will suit your child and whether this is somewhere they might enjoy learning.

Children who have experienced trauma or loss may need additional support to ensure that they are happy and successful in school. It is important to choose a school that understands this and that can support them to thrive. When choosing a school, it might be helpful to ask questions such as:

- Do staff receive training on the impact of early trauma, loss and attachment?
- How are children supported during transitions e.g. change of year group, moving from primary to secondary school?
- How does the school help children build friendships?
- Does the school's behaviour policy recognise behaviour as a form of communication?
- How does the school work in partnership with families?

More questions to ask can be found on the PAC UK website <https://www.pac-uk.org/>

### Free School Meals

Children in reception, year 1 and year 2 are universally entitled to free school meals. From year 3 onwards, children may be entitled to free school meals if their special guardian is in receipt of certain benefits.

You can check if you are eligible and apply for free school meals here:

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals>

### Free early education and childcare

A 2 year old child may be entitled to free early education and childcare if their special guardian is receipt of certain benefits.

They would also be eligible if they have an ECHP (education health and care plan), receive disability living allowance (DLA) or left care under an SGO.

You can check if they are eligible here:

<https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/free-childcare-2-year-olds>

All 3-4 year olds are entitled to 15 hours free early education during term time from the term after their 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday. This can sometimes be spread throughout the year with fewer hours per week, but this will depend on the setting.

Some 3 to 4-year-olds are eligible for 30 hours free childcare a week.

[Check if you're eligible and find out how to apply](#)



## **SEND (special education needs and disabilities)**

- **Local Offer**

Every local authority must outline all services in their local area for children who have SEN or disabilities and include them in an information directory called the Local Offer.

In Bristol this information is available via <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/bristol-local-offer>
- **School SEND support**

All schools have a responsibility to provide support for children with SEND and make reasonable adjustments to meet their needs. If you are concerned about your child's additional needs you can request a meeting with the school SENCo to identify their needs and plan interventions to support them.
- **EHCP (Education Health and Care Plan)**

If a child is not making progress with the school support in place, or if they have complex needs they may require an Education Health and Care Needs Assessment. This might lead to a statutory plan (EHCP) which clearly outlines their needs and the provision that needs to be in place to support them. Your child's school can request a needs assessment or you can do this yourself via the Local Offer website.
- **Support for families of children with SEND**

If you need information or advice about early support for your child's additional needs, phone FLORA on 0117 352 6020, or email [flora@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:flora@bristol.gov.uk)

If you need independent information and advice, phone [SEND And You \(SAY\)](#) on 0117 989 7725

## **Previously looked after children**

If your child was in care immediately prior to the SGO being granted they are known as a 'previously looked after child' (PLAC).

- **Priority admissions**

Previously looked after children have priority admissions arrangements. You will need to check the 'previously looked after child' box on the school application form and provide evidence of the special guardianship order and having previously been in care (eg letter/ email from a social worker).

This evidence will be needed again when your child moves from primary to secondary school or has any other school changes.

- **'Designated teacher' for previously looked after children**

Every school has a named teacher to monitor and support previously looked after children.



This person should be your main point of contact so make sure you know their name and have their contact details. You can request to speak with the Designated Teacher if you are choosing a school, or to support your child's transition to a new school, as well as once they have started.

- **Pupil Premium plus funding (PP+)**

School can claim additional funding to support previously looked after children.

You need to show evidence (as above) so that the school can claim funding. Although this is not a 'personal budget' schools are advised to discuss with families how this funding is used to support your child.

- **Education Plan meetings**

It is strongly recommended to hold regular meetings even when things are going well so your child's needs can be identified and planned for.

You can contact the Designated Teacher to request a meeting to discuss support for your child and agree an Education Plan.

There is a template on the HOPE website that schools can use for this: [HOPE PLAC Education Plan template](#)

### **Further information and support**

The HOPE Virtual School provides information, advice and guidance on education matters for children who were previously looked after.

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/the-hope>

Email: [post.lac@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:post.lac@bristol.gov.uk)





## Information for Birth Parents

### What is Special Guardianship?

Special Guardianship Order's (SGO) are formal court orders, which concern the permanent arrangements for your child's future home. If an SGO is made in respect of your child, it means that they will live with their special guardian who will have overall responsibility for them until they reach the age of 18 years. When your child lives with a special guardian, they are not looked after by the Local Authority (in care).

Special Guardians must be over the age of 18 years and should have an existing or possible relationship with your child for example:

- Grandparents
- Aunt/Uncle
- Brother/Sister
- Other relatives
- Family friend
- Neighbour

Unrelated foster carer

### What is Parental Responsibility?

Parental responsibility means 'all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and their property'.

All Birth Mothers are automatically granted parental responsibility for their children.

Any Father who is, or has been, married to the child's Mother has parental responsibility for that child and so does an unmarried Father who is registered on his child's birth certificate. Birth parents can only lose parental responsibility if their child is adopted.

### Parental Responsibility and SGO

When an SGO is awarded by the courts the Special Guardian acquires overriding parental responsibility. This gives the Special Guardian control of the 'day to day'



care and decision making for your child(ren) although you as a Birth Parent still retain a reduced form of parental responsibility. The Special Guardian will be able to make decisions without the need to consult you such as which school your child attends or whether they are vaccinated.

If there is disagreement between you and the Special Guardian(s), then we strongly recommend that you work with the Special Guardian to find some compromise which will meet the best interests of your child. If you need support with this, you can get some advice and guidance from the Special Guardianship Team. However, the Special Guardian can make decisions which you may not like without your agreement. There are some decisions which cannot be taken without your consent, or if you do not consent without the permission of the court.

These include:

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

## **What does Special Guardianship mean for me?**

An SGO is made when the Local Authority and Court have decided that your child cannot live with you on a permanent basis. Your child will live with their Special Guardian until they are 18 years old. SGO means your child is not looked after by the Local Authority and a Social Worker will no longer be allocated to oversee their care plan.

SGO Support can be offered to your child and their Special Guardian. This support can include advice and support around contact arrangements between you and your child.

Social Workers in the SGO team are responsible for undertaking assessments and creating a support plan which looks at the support delivered to your child and their Special Guardian.

## **Will I be able to see my child?**

Many children who are living under Special Guardianship Orders do see their parents and other family members. This is usually arranged between yourself and the Special Guardian, although sometimes Social Workers may help to have conversations about what will work best for you, the Special Guardian and most



importantly the child. Sometimes the Court will make a Child Arrangement Order saying who the child will see and how frequently. They might make this if they feel

that seeing you is in the child's best interests and that this may not happen without an order.

Maintaining contact with your child and spending time with them will naturally feel very important. When the adults are communicating well and in agreement with the arrangements Family Time for children who live with Special Guardians can be a positive and happy experience. However, when things are not going well it can cause a lot of anxiety for all involved but especially for the child who can feel confused and worried. It is important to think as early as possible about how you would like Family Time to take place and what will work best for your child at the age they are now. Time with your children may not always be the way you had hoped but it is important to focus on your child's needs and remember that it is something that will develop over the years as your child grows.

Think about who in your network can help and support you with Family Time. Sometimes children need their time with their parents supervised by another adult. Having people in our life who can support you with this will enable things to run smoothly. Think about creating a Family Time Agreement from the beginning of the SGO arrangement. A Family Time Agreement is a plan which is drawn up by parents and carers, but also children when they're old enough, and is a way of setting out what Family Time should involve, how often it should happen, where and who takes responsibility for different aspects of the event. The aim is to have an agreement in place to avoid confusion and conflict which could affect your child.

A template of a Family Time Agreement is attached. If you need any support completing this or liaising with the Special Guardian please contact our team for advice.

## **What happens if you disagree with how the Special Guardian is raising your child?**

The Special Guardian has parental responsibility for your child, so they do not have to ask you about most decisions. However, if there are things you feel very strongly about you should tell the Special Guardian from the beginning of the arrangement what you would like to happen and see if you can reach an agreement. It is best to talk to them directly, but if you find this difficult you could ask for help from the SGO team or you could ask if the Special Guardian will agree to see a family mediator.

Mediators can help people find solutions where there are disagreements. Some contact details for mediation services are below.



## Further Information and Useful Organisations

*Below are some organisations that you might find useful.*

### Family Rights Group

Offer advice/support to parents and carers about their rights and options when social workers or courts make decisions about their children's welfare. FRG can provide legal advice where a child is 'previously looked after'.

Family Rights Group provide lots of information on their website and have a free confidential helpline.

Telephone: 0808 801 0366  
(Monday to Friday 9:30am to 3:00pm)

Website: <https://frg.org.uk/>

### Citizens Advice

Citizens Advice is an independent organisation providing free, confidential and impartial advice on all subjects to anyone. The address and telephone number of all your local Citizen's Advice Bureau can be found in the telephone directory. There is also advice on their website.

Telephone: 0800 144 8848  
(Monday to Friday 9:00am to 5:00pm)

Website: [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

### Civil Legal Advice

Civil Legal Advice is a free and confidential advice service. It provides information directly to the public on a range of common legal issues and helps people find legal help and information. It can also help you find legal advisors and find out if you are eligible for publicly funded free legal help.

Telephone: 0845 345 4345  
(Monday to Friday 9:00am to 8:00pm, Saturday 9:00am to 12:30pm)



Website: <https://www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice>

Civil Legal Advice's find a legal advisor service is available at <http://legaladviserfinder.justice.gov.uk/AdviserSearch.do>

## **Coram Children's Legal Centre**

Coram Children's Legal Centre provides free independent legal advice to children, parents, carers and professionals. Their website provides legal advice and information covering all aspects of law and policy affecting children.

Telephone: 0300 330 5480  
(Monday to Friday 8:00am to 6:00pm)

Website: <http://childlawadvice.org.uk>

## **Family Mediation**

To find a mediator, you can contact:  
The National Family Mediation (NFM) service in your local area. A list of services can be found on their website, or you can call or email for support.

Telephone: 01392 271610  
(Monday to Friday 9:00am – 5:00pm)

Email: [general@nfm.org.uk](mailto:general@nfm.org.uk)

Website: <http://www.nfm.org.uk>

## **The Ministry of Justice**

The Ministry of Justice's Family Mediation Helpline can refer you to a mediator from their joint register.

Telephone: 01707 594055  
(Monday to Friday 9:00am – 3:00pm)

Email: [info@familymediationcouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@familymediationcouncil.org.uk)



Website: <http://www.familymediationcouncil.org.uk/>

## **Family Lives**

Family Lives is a charity providing advice, information and advocacy to parents and families whose children are involved with Children's Services due to the welfare needs or concerns. Whatever might have led up to your children being removed from your care, it's understandable that your emotions might be in total turmoil, with lots of unanswered questions running through your head. Having support around you – close family or friends who you can lean on can be comforting. They have comprehensive advice sheets on their website and also a telephone advice line. Their confidential helpline offers a listening ear and emotional support.

Telephone – 0808 800 2222

Website - <https://www.familylives.org.uk>

## **Advocacy/Complaints Procedure**

Advocates can assist you if necessary, if you wish to make a complaint about the service you received.

BRISTOL:

Freepost RTKJ-SGBZ-ULSH  
Customer Relations Team (100TS)  
PO Box 3176  
Bristol City Council  
BS3 9FS

[complaints.feedback@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:complaints.feedback@bristol.gov.uk)

There is an Independent Advocacy Service for children and young people who wish to make a complaint provided by various organisations:

[www.actionforchildren.org.uk](http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk)

[www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk)



## Glossary of Terms

- **Adoption** – A legal process by which a child becomes a full and permanent member of a new family. The birth parent loses parental responsibility.
- **CAFCASS** – The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service. They are an organisation which provides specialist Social Workers who are experienced at dealing with family problems. They carry out safeguarding checks and can prepare a report dealing with the best interests of the child(ren) involved in court proceedings.
- **Care Order** – A Care Order is a permanent Order and grants Local Authorities Parental Responsibility for a child or young person. This means that they are able to make decisions about the child's living arrangements and does not need the parents' permission to do so.
- **Child Arrangements Order** – An Order governing: a) Whom a child is to live with and b) Whom the child should have contact with and when this should occur. This replaces Orders previously known as 'Contact' and 'Residence' Orders.
- **Fostering** – A form of care provided to a child who is usually not related to the carer, when the child is in the care of the Local Authority.
- **Kinship Care** – Kinship Care is an arrangement where a child who cannot be cared for by their parents goes to live with a relative or a family friend. This is an umbrella term which includes private family arrangements, kinship fostering, SGO and Child Arrangements Order.
- **Looked After** – When a child is in the care of the Local Authority. Parents can either agree to this, or a Court can order children to be 'looked after'.
- **Mediation** – A way to try and resolve a dispute. Parties meet and talk through the issue in the presence of an independent third party. Mediation is a legal requirement before any application can be made to the Court for private family law applications (such as Special Guardianship Order through private family law rather than through care proceedings).



- **Parental Responsibility (PR)** – The power to make important decisions in relation to a child. For example, determining the child’s education and where the child goes to school; choosing, registering, or changing the child’s name; consenting to a child’s operation or certain medical treatment; accessing a child’s medical records; consenting to taking the child abroad for holidays or extended stays; representing the child in legal proceedings; determining the religion the child should be brought up with. All mothers and most fathers have legal rights and responsibilities as a parent. If you have parental responsibility, your most important roles are to: provide a home for the child and protect and maintain the child.
- **Pupil Premium** – The Pupil Premium is additional funding for publicly funded schools in England to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and close the gap between them and their peers.
- **Special Educational Needs (SEN)** – A term used to describe a child who has a learning difficulty which calls for Special Educational provision to be made for him/her.
- **Special Guardianship Order** – Special Guardianship Order is a Court Order that places a child or a young person to live with someone other than their parents. The Special Guardian will get higher parental responsibility than other persons with parental responsibility for the child.
- **Testamentary Guardian** – Special Guardians can appoint a Testamentary Guardian (i.e. name a person in their will who they want to care for the child when they die). The Testamentary Guardian would obtain Parental Responsibility should the Special Guardian die. This Testamentary Guardian may still need to seek a Child Arrangements Order or Special Guardianship Order if a dispute arises as to where the child should live.