



The Special Guardianship Assessment

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In what circumstances would a Special Guardianship be considered?

1. The following are some examples from the statutory guidance of when Special Guardianship would be considered appropriate for a child are:
 - i. a looked after child cared for by a relative/friend requiring permanence where the alternative would be adoption outside of the family;
 - ii. Foster carers wishing to achieve permanence for a child in placement where the Department is in agreement that this plan is in the best interests of the child;
 - iii. a case in which there are cultural or religious objections to adoption;
 - iv. an older child who is wishing to retain legal links with his or her birth parents and does not wish to be adopted but would like security;
 - v. a child whose parents are not in the country but wish to retain legal links with them, but for practical purposes it is appropriate that parental responsibility is with a Special Guardian e.g. an unaccompanied child seeking asylum.

The assessment/court reports

2. Save where a case when a court directs a Special Guardianship Assessment, a Viability Assessment is the first assessment completed by the Kinship Assessment Team to assess whether a Special Guardianship Assessment or Connected Carer Assessment is viable and, in the child's, best interests. A Viability Assessment may take up to 4 weeks to complete.
3. If the Viability Assessment is positive this may lead to the Special Guardianship Assessment or Connected Carers assessment, these assessments take up to 12 weeks to complete.

How is an assessment/court report requested?

4. Notice of application for a family/friend to become a Special Guardian is received by the Court or by Child Advice and Duty Service (CADS). CADS can be contacted by calling 0344 800 8020; or
5. If the case is in Care Proceedings and in principle permanence decision is obtained that a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) be pursued as the disposal of the Proceedings (subject to the assessment of the identified Special Guardian/s).
6. Usually, a Viability Assessment will be completed within 4 weeks.
7. A Special Guardianship Assessment is normally completed in 12 weeks unless a different time scale is agreed by the Kinship Assessment Team Manager and Court.

The viability assessment process

8. An application for an adult to be assessed to care for the child is received by Norfolk Children's Services via the Court to CADS or a request for an assessment via Care Proceedings.
9. The assessment process is as followings:
 - i. a Family Assessment and Safeguarding Team (FAST) or In Care Team Social Worker will complete a referral to Norfolk's Kinship Assessment Team (LCS document Kinship Referral Form);
 - ii. the prospective Special Guardian will be contacted to provide agreement for an assessment to take place;
 - iii. checks regarding the prospective Special Guardians and any children in their care/have been in their care will be completed on Norfolk's Children's Services data. If the prospective Special Guardian lives out of Norfolk, their local Children's Services will be contacted for details regarding the Special Guardian or any children who have lived in their care;
 - iv. checks will be completed via the Police National Computer (PNC check) on anyone over 18 who lives with the prospective carer;
 - v. a Viability Assessment will be completed by a Kinship Assessment Social Worker. The Viability Assessment will be completed via home visits, virtual calls, and telephone calls;
 - vi. for a Viability to recommend a child is placed in the prospective special guardians care the Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards (NMS) must be met. In circumstances where the NMS cannot be met, but it is in the child's best interest to live with the prospective carer a plan must be put together how Norfolk County Council will support the placement;
 - vii. the Viability Assessment will be approved by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) within Norfolk County Council and thereafter filed with the court to NPLaw;
 - viii. the prospective Special Guardian will receive the Viability Assessment with a letter outlining the next stage;
 - ix. if the Viability Assessment does not recommend further assessment the matter with end there. If the prospective Special Guardian wishes to challenge the assessment, they will need to follow the advice in the letter attached to Viability Assessment;
 - x. if the Viability Assessment recommends further assessments the FAST (Family Assessment and Safeguarding Team) or In Care Team social worker will complete a further referral to the Kinship Team to request a full Special Guardianship Assessment.

Regulation 24 placements

10. To care for a looked after child (a child who is placed under an Interim Care Order or S20 (CA89)), relatives, friends or other connected persons must be approved as foster carers under the 2011 Fostering Service Regulations or temporarily approved as foster carers under the 2010 Care Planning Placement and Review Regulations. The 2011 Fostering National Minimum Standards (NMS) for Fostering Services apply.

11. If a looked after child is placed in the care of a family or friend after a positive Viability Assessment the family or friend will become a temporary approved foster carer for the child/children, they are caring for only.
12. Regulations 24 of the 2010 Care Planning Regulations set out arrangements for the temporary approval of a connected person as a foster carer in exceptional circumstances for up to 16 weeks to allow an immediate placement and sufficient time for a foster carer approval process to be undertaken, including any **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)** checks required.
13. Regulation 25 of the 2010 Care Planning Regulations permits an extension of 8 weeks to the original 16 weeks if the full assessment process has not been completed within that period. Any further extension would need to be specifically dealt with by a judge in proceedings. If a further extension is agreed by the court the Head of Service for the child must be informed and the Head of Service for Kinship Assessment must be informed.
14. Standard 30 of the NMS 2011 relates specifically to family and friends foster carers. It clarifies that when a foster carer is being assessed for approval for a specific child or children only, there is no need to consider their suitability to care for other children.
15. Once approved, the family and friends foster carer must be notified in writing and of the terms of the approval which often include that they may foster only a specific named child or children.
16. All foster carers, including those who have been temporarily approved under the 2010 Regulations, must also enter into a foster care agreement covering the matters set out in Schedule 5 to the 2011 Fostering Regulations.
17. In approving the kinship foster carer, the fostering service will need to be satisfied that there is adequate bedroom space to a suitable standard, as set out in Standard 10.6 of the 2011 NMS, or if this is not the case, set out proposals as to how it will be met in the future.
18. If agreed in court and the child transitions to their family member or friend the child's social worker will arrange a Placement Planning meeting within 7 days of the child being placed with the carers which also includes confirmation of which specific activities to the carer, delegated authority. The Supervising Social Worker from the Kinship Assessment Team will also attend this meeting to support the carers.
19. Once the child is placed in the prospective special guardian's care under an Interim Care Order or in certain case Section 20 (CA89) it is Norfolk Children's Services discretion if the prospective Special Guardian will be paid a fostering allowance for the child in placement.
20. A further referral needs to be made to the Kinship Assessment Team, in a timely manner, by the child's allocated social worker to complete the full Special Guardianship Assessment.

Placements outside of fostering regulations (temporarily approved connected carers placement exceeding 24 weeks)

21. There are circumstances when a child may need to remain in a kinship carer placement outside of regulation 24 and 25, this may be due to extended court proceedings. In these circumstances the following procedure will be adhered to.
22. It is the responsibility of the Kinship Assessment Social Worker and child/ren's Social Workers to complete Placement Outside of Fostering Regulations Viability Assessment.
23. The Placement Outside of Fostering Regulations Viability Assessment must have an overview from the child's Independent Reviewing Officer.
24. The Placement Outside of Fostering Regulations Viability Assessment must state why the placement is required outside of regulations and why the placement is in the child's best interest.
25. The Placement Outside of Fostering Regulations Viability Assessment must be provided to the Agency Decision Maker for oversight and agreement where placements continue outside of Care Planning Regulations 24 and 25.
26. The Placement Outside of Fostering Regulations Viability Assessment should only be used when the child(ren's) temporary placement with connected persons foster carers has exceeded the maximum period of 24 weeks without a recommendation/decision for full approval. The Head of Fostering will monitor the agreements and supervision of these placements.
27. The Placement Outside of Fostering Regulations Viability Assessment must be completed by the Kinship Assessment Social Worker every 18 weeks.

Kinship Assessment Social Worker support during the assessment period

28. After the Viability Assessment has been completed, and if the Court agree for the child to be placed in the prospective special guardian's care, the prospective special guardians will be supported by a Kinship Assessment Social Worker. As per Standard 30 of the NMS 2011.
29. The support that can be provided:

1:1 support

30. The social worker who provides the 1:1 support to the kinship carer will be the social worker who carries out the Special Guardianship Assessment. The support is not limited to completing the assessment alone. The prospective special guardians can seek support, including but not limited to, support for equipment to meet the child's needs, advice and guidance on caring for the child in their care, managing the changes in their home and the impact on the family of caring for the child.

31. 1:1 support will include discussions regarding the needs of the child and how the kinship carer meets these. From the start of an assessment conversations will include how the prospective special guardian will work with other agencies and what support they may require.

Group/peer support

32. During the process of the Special Guardianship Assessment prospective special guardians will be invited to attend groups held by Norfolk Kinship Team. The groups are a forum to discuss the process of the Special Guardianship Assessment, Care Proceedings and what to expect if a Special Guardianship Order is granted.
33. The group support provides opportunity for prospective special guardians to other special guardians and meet other special guardians, their different experiences and be provided with advice on what support is available after a Special Guardianship Order is granted.

Family group conference/family network Meeting

34. The statutory guidance indicates the importance of local authorities engaging with birth parents and the wider family network at an early stage. During the Special Guardianship Assessment period family and friends will be invited to come together to discuss what support they are able to offer to the prospective special guardians during the assessment period and beyond. Examples of support that could be offered by family is school drop off and pickups, overnight care, holiday care, time to talk, financial support or emergency support. Any plans of support will be added into the Special Guardianship Support Plan.

Training

35. All Kinship Carers will be invited to access the Norfolk Foster Carers Hub. Kinship Carers are requested to complete their First Aid Training and Safeguarding Training via the Hub; further training is offered which any carer can apply to attend to aid them in caring for their child.

The Special Guardianship assessment – documents required

36. If a positive Viability Assessment is completed the child's social worker will complete a further referral to the Kinship Assessment Team.
37. Upon the allocation of the special guardianship assessment to the Kinship Assessment Social Worker the following will be carried out:
- i. a Kinship Team Social Worker will contact the prospective Special Guardian to arrange home visits;
 - ii. Kinship Assessment Business Support will contact the prospective Special Guardian for completion of a DP1 (agreement to contact other agencies);
 - iii. Kinship Assessment Business Support will start a Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check with the prospective carer. The prospective carer then must complete the DBS check at home and confirm the information requested;
 - iv. contact details for three references for **each** prospective Special Guardian will be sought;

- v. Kinship Assessment Business Support will contact the prospective special guardians GP to ascertain each prospective special guardian's medical history;
- vi. the Kinship Assessment Social Worker where the special guardian is eligible (see Financial Means Test Policy) will require the prospective special guardian to complete a financial means test. This will require information on income and outgoings, including salary, savings, debts and so forth;
- vii. where eligible for a financial means test the prospective special guardian must provide the following documents with the means test form:
 - a. 3 months' pay slips for ALL parties;
 - b. or if on Universal Credit the complete documents with breakdown;
 - c. 3 months of latest Bank Statements of ALL accounts.
- viii. the Special Guardianship Assessment may take up to 12 weeks to complete;
- ix. once completed the Special Guardianship Assessment will be signed by assessing social worker, approved by the Kinship Assessment Team Manager and filed and served by Norfolk County Council Legal Services, NPLaw;
- x. if directed to complete a Special Guardianship Assessment a Special Guardian Support Plan must be complete regarding what support will be offered to the child and the prospective Special Guardian. If the assessment does not recommend the carers as special guardians, this matter must be discussed with NPLaw;
- xi. the Special Guardians will be supported to seek independent Legal Advice by Norfolk County Council up to the amount of £250;
- xii. once the Special Guardianship Assessment and Special Guardian Support Plan is agreed by Norfolk Adoption and Kinship Support Team Manager/Head of Service for Adoption and Kinship Support and the Head of Social Work for the child, the documents will be filed with the Court to aid decision making;
- xiii. at the disposal hearing the Family Court Judge will make the decision on making a Special Guardianship Order and contact.

38. Please note prospective Special Guardians are not able to sit in the Court room unless Party to Proceedings or invited in by the Judge. Norfolk County Council or any staff member from Norfolk County Council cannot alter this decision. The Judge is the only person who can invite the prospective special guardian into the court.

39. If a Special Guardianship Order is to be made the prospective special guardian maybe invited into the court room to confirm their position.

The Special Guardianship assessment

The assessment in respect of the child

40. The matters that must be dealt with in the assessment regarding the child are as follows:

- i. name, sex, date and place of birth and address including local authority area;
- ii. a photograph and physical description;
- iii. nationality (and immigration status where appropriate);
- iv. racial origin and cultural and linguistic background;
- v. religious persuasion (including details of baptism, confirmation or equivalent ceremonies);
- vi. details of any siblings including their dates of birth;

- vii. the extent of the child's contact with his relatives and any other person the local authority consider relevant;
- viii. any harm the child has suffered;
- ix. any risk of future harm to the child posed by the child's parents, relatives or any other person the local authority consider relevant.
- x. whether the child is or has been looked after or is or has been provided with accommodation by a voluntary organisation and details (including dates) of placements by Norfolk County Council or organisation;
- xi. a description of the child's personality, his social development and his emotional and behavioural development and any related current or likely future needs;
- xii. details of the child's interests, likes and dislikes;
- xiii. a health history and a description of the state of the child's health which shall include any treatment the child is receiving;
- xiv. names, addresses and types of nurseries or schools attended with dates;
- xv. the child's educational attainments;
- xvi. whether the child has an Education, Health or Care Plan; and
- xvii. details of any order made by a court with respect to the child under the Act including:
 - a. the name of the court;
 - b. the order made; and
 - c. the date on which the order was made.

The assessment in respect of the child's birth parents and anyone who holds parental responsibility

41. The matters that must be dealt with in the assessment regarding the child's family are as follows:

- i. name, date and place of birth and address (and the date on which their last address was confirmed) including local authority area of each parent of the child and his siblings under the age of 18;
- ii. a photograph, if available, and physical description of each parent;
- iii. nationality (and immigration status where appropriate) of each parent;
- iv. racial origin and cultural and linguistic background of each parent;
- v. whether the child's parents were married to each other at the time of the child's birth or have subsequently married and whether they are divorced or separated;
- vi. where the child's parents have been previously married or formed a civil partnership, the date of the marriage or civil partnership;
- vii. where the child's parents are not married, whether the father has Parental Responsibility and, if so, how it was acquired;
- viii. if the identity or whereabouts of the father are not known, the information about him that has been ascertained and from whom, and the steps that have been taken to establish paternity;
- ix. the past and present relationship of the child's parents;
- x. where available, the following information in respect of each parent:
 - a. health history, including details of any serious physical or mental illness, any hereditary disease or disorder or disability
 - b. religious persuasion;
 - c. educational history;
 - d. employment history;
 - e. personality and interests.

- xi. In respect of the child's siblings under the age of 18:
 - a. the person with whom the sibling is living;
 - b. whether the sibling is looked after by a local authority or provided with accommodation by a voluntary organisation; and
 - c. details of any court order made with respect to the sibling under the Act, including the name of the court, the order made and the date on which the order was made.

The assessment in respect of the wishes and feelings of the child and others

42. The matters that must be dealt with in the assessment regarding the wishes and feelings of the child and others. An assessment of the child's wishes and feelings (considered in light of his age and understanding) regarding:

- i. Special Guardianship;
- ii. His religious and cultural upbringing; and
- iii. Contact with his relatives and any other person the local authority consider relevant, and the date on which the child's wishes and feelings were last ascertained.
- iv. The wishes and feelings of each parent regarding-
- v. Special Guardianship;
- vi. The child's religious and cultural upbringing; and
- vii. contact with the child, and the date on which the wishes and feelings of each parent were last ascertained; and
- viii. The wishes and feelings of any of the child's relatives, or any other person the local authority consider relevant regarding the child and the dates on which those wishes and feelings were last ascertained.

The assessment in respect of the prospective special guardian or, where two or more persons are jointly prospective Special Guardians, each of them

43. The matters that must be dealt with in the assessment regarding the prospective Special Guardian/Guardians are as follows:

- i. name, date and place of birth and address including local authority area;
- ii. a photograph and physical description;
- iii. nationality (and immigration status where appropriate);
- iv. racial origin and cultural and linguistic background;
- v. if the prospective Special Guardian is:
 - a. married, the date and place of marriage;
 - b. has formed a civil partnership, the date and place of registration of the civil partnership; or
 - c. has a partner, details of that relationship.
- vi. details of any previous marriage, civil partnership, or relationship;
- vii. where the prospective Special Guardians wish to apply jointly, the nature of their relationship and an assessment of the stability of that relationship;
- viii. if the prospective Special Guardian is a member of a couple and is applying alone for a Special Guardianship Order, the reasons for this;
- ix. whether the prospective Special Guardian is a relative of the child;
- x. an assessment of the prospective Special Guardian's current and past relationship with the child;

- xi. a health history of the prospective Special Guardian including details of any serious physical or mental illness, any hereditary disease or disorder or disability;
- xii. a description of how the prospective Special Guardian relates to adults and children;
- xiii. previous experience of caring for children;
- xiv. an assessment of the prospective Special Guardian's parenting capacity including:
 - a. their understanding of, and ability to meet the child's current and likely future needs, particularly, any needs the child may have arising from harm that the child has suffered;
 - b. their understanding of, and ability to protect the child from any current or future risk of harm posed by the child's parents, relatives or any other person the local authority consider relevant, particularly in relation to contact between any such person and the child;
 - c. their ability and suitability to bring up the child until the child reaches the age of eighteen.
- xv. where there have been any past assessments as a prospective adopter, foster carer or Special Guardian, relevant details as appropriate;
- xvi. details of income and expenditure;
- xvii. information about the prospective Special Guardian's home and the neighbourhood in which he lives;
- xviii. details of other members of the household and details of any children of the prospective Special Guardian even if not resident in the household;
- xix. details of the parents and any siblings of the prospective Special Guardian, with their ages or ages at death including:
 - a. religious persuasion;
 - b. educational history;
 - c. employment history; and
 - d. personality and interests.
- xx. details of any previous family court proceedings in which the prospective special guardian has been involved (which have not been referred to elsewhere in the report);
- xxi. a report of each of the interviews with the three persons nominated by the prospective Special Guardian to provide personal references for him;
- xxii. whether the prospective Special Guardian is willing to follow any wishes of the child or his parents in respect of the child's religious and cultural upbringing;
- xxiii. the views of other members of the prospective Special Guardian's household and wider family in relation to the prospective Special Guardianship Order;
- xxiv. an assessment of the child's current and future relationship with the family of the prospective Special Guardian;
- xxv. reasons for applying for a Special Guardianship Order and extent of understanding of the nature and effect of Special Guardianship and whether the prospective Special Guardian has discussed Special Guardianship with the child;
- xxvi. any hopes and expectations the prospective Special Guardian has for the child's future; and
- xxvii. the prospective Special Guardian's wishes and feelings in relation to contact between the child and his relatives or any other person the local authority considers relevant.

The assessment in respect of the local authority completing the report

- 44.** The matters that must be dealt with in the assessment in respect of the Local Authority are as follows:
- i. name and address;
 - ii. details of any past involvement of the local authority with the prospective special guardian, including any past preparation for that person to be a local authority foster carer or adoptive parent or Special Guardian;
 - iii. where the prospective Special Guardian lives in the area of another local authority, details of the local authority's enquiries of that other local authority about the prospective Special Guardian;
 - iv. a summary of any Special Guardianship support services provided by Norfolk County Council for the prospective Special Guardian, the child or the child's parent and the period for which those services are to be provided; and
 - v. where the local authority has decided not to provide Special Guardianship support services, the reasons why;
 - vi. a summary prepared by the medical professional.
 - vii. the implications of the making of a Special Guardianship Order for:
 - a. the child;
 - b. the child's parent;
 - c. the prospective Special Guardian and his family; and
 - d. any other person the local authority considers relevant.
- 45.** The relative merits of Special Guardianship and other orders which may be made under the Act or the Adoption and Children Act 2002 with an assessment of whether the child's long-term interests would be best met by a Special Guardianship Order.
- 46.** A recommendation as to whether or not the Special Guardianship Order sought should be made in respect of the child and, if not, any alternative proposal in respect of the child.
- 47.** A recommendation as to what arrangements there should be for contact between the child and his relatives or any person the local authority consider relevant.
- 48.** The prospective carers should have time to read and comment on the assessment report before it is filed.
- 49.** Following the filing of the report, the prospective carers should be given the opportunity to seek independent advice and legal advice to understand fully the implications of any Orders made and if need be, make applications of their own.
- 50.** A Special Guardianship Support Plan (See Norfolk's Policy on the Special Guardianship Support Plan) will need to be provided at the time of filing the Special Guardianship Order report and its recommendation, detailing the support to be provided to the carers and the child and include details of arrangements for contact for the child with their birth parents. The potential applicants should be able to seek legal advice regarding the Support Plan and the prospective order.

Sharing the Special Guardianship assessment in public proceedings

51. The Social worker from the Kinship Assessment Team who completed the assessment will share the completed and signed off Special Guardianship Assessment with the prospective Special Guardians.
52. If the Special Guardianship Assessment supports, the making of the Special Guardianship Order the next steps will be discussed with the prospective Special Guardians.
53. If the Special Guardianship Assessment does not recommend the making of a Special Guardianship Order the prospective Special Guardians will be able to discuss the concerns with Kinship Assessment Social Worker.
54. The prospective Special Guardians have a right to contest the assessment in the court proceedings and will be provided with a letter from NPLaw to outline the steps they can take if they do not agree with the recommendations or wish to contest the Special Guardianship Assessment.
55. The Special Guardianship Assessment and Support Plan will be filed and served by NPLaw (Norfolk County Councils Legal Services) and shared with all parties in proceedings. It is a requirement of the court for Norfolk County Council to file and serve the Special Guardianship Assessment and Support Plan with all parties in proceedings.

If an assessment completed by the Kinship Assessment team does not recommend the placement

56. If Norfolk's Kinship Assessment Team is not satisfied that the making of a Special Guardianship Order would be beneficial to the child's welfare, there is no requirement for the Kinship Team to either assist the applicants with the costs involved in making an application or to provide on-going financial support.
57. If Norfolk's Kinship Assessment Team does not recommend the making of a Special Guardianship Order the prospective special guardian is able to contest the assessment by filing a statement to the court or by financing their own legal representation.
58. Norfolk's Kinship Assessment Team will alter any incorrect factual information that the prospective special guardian can demonstrate.
59. Norfolk's Kinship Assessment Team will not alter any information the prospective special guardian does not agree with.
60. If the Family and Assessment Safeguarding Team (FAST) or In CareTeam decide to pursue the making of a Special Guardianship Order, it is the Locality that will need to provide all financial support if any of the following occurs:
 - i. if the prospective special guardian contest the Assessment and Norfolk's Kinship Assessment Team are not informed of this and any legal advice provided by NPLaw;

- ii. if the prospective special guardian contest the Assessment and an Independent Social Worker completes a further Special Guardianship Assessment and the children are placed without contest of the ISW assessment;
- iii. if a Special Guardianship Order is granted after Norfolk's Kinship Assessment Team do not recommend the Order the following will be provided by different teams; such as the Family Assessment and Safeguarding Teams (FAST) or In Care Teams:
 - a. all required statements required by the Court;
 - b. a Special Guardianship Support Plan signed by the Locality Head of Service and by the Kinship Support Team Manager;
 - c. all financial support to the Special Guardians after the making of the SGO;
 - d. set up the financial support after the making of the SGO.
- iv. if a Special Guardianship Order is granted after Norfolk's Kinship Assessment Team do not recommend the Order the following will be provided by Kinship Team:
 - a. advise and Support after the making of the SGO;
 - b. assessment of support needs after two years from the making of the Special Guardianship Order was granted;
 - c. if felt necessary a referral to the Adoption Support Fund, whilst this is still in place.

61. If there are concerns regarding the child's safety, wellbeing and development after the making of the Special Guardianship Order a referral can be made to Norfolk Child Advice and Duty Team to see if the Special Guardian and child need additional support via section 17 Children Act 1989.

Sharing the Special Guardianship assessment in private proceedings

- 62.** The Social worker from the Norfolk's Kinship Assessment Team who completed the assessment will gain approval for the assessment from the Kinship Assessment Team manager and share the Special Guardianship Assessment with the prospective Special Guardians.
- 63.** If the Special Guardianship Assessment supports, the making of the Special Guardianship Order the next steps will be discussed with the prospective Special Guardians and the child's allocated social worker.
- 64.** If the Special Guardianship Assessment does not recommend the making of a Special Guardianship Order the prospective Special Guardians will be able to discuss the concerns with Kinship Assessment Social Worker.
- 65.** Norfolk's Kinship Assessment Team Social Worker will send a letter to the prospective Special Guardian outlining the concerns and recommendations.
- 66.** The final Special Guardianship Assessment will be filed directly with the Court via Norfolk Children's Services Court Work Team.
- 67.** The prospective Special Guardian may contest the Special Guardianship Assessment; in Court in person or seek their own legal advice, which they will need to fund themselves.

68. The Court will make all decisions on how to proceed in the child's best interest. The final decision is not made by Norfolk Children's Services.
69. Financial support will not be provided if the Special Guardianship Assessment is negative, and the court grants an SGO.

The Special Guardianship support plan

70. Special Guardianship Regulations 2016 detail that a Special Guardianship Support Plans (SGSP) is required to set out the support and services to be provided to the child and the prospective Special Guardians as set out in the regulations.
71. The SGSP is based on the child's lived experiences and those of the Special Guardians. The SGSP will include, but not limited to:
- i. the harm that the child may have suffered;
 - ii. the needs of the child;
 - iii. the Special Guardians capacity to understand the harm the child may have suffered;
 - iv. the Special Guardians ability to meet the needs of the child;
 - v. the role of other agencies in meeting the child's needs;
 - vi. what the prospective special guardians will needs to do to mee the child's needs;
 - vii. the support Norfolk Adoption and Kinship Support Team may offer;
 - viii. how the prospective Special Guardian can assess support, advice and signposting from Norfolk's Adoption and Kinship Support Team;
 - ix. where eligible any financial support that will be provided;
 - x. how any financial support will be reviewed as per the Special Guardianship Regulations 2005 (amended 2016);
 - xi. any one-off lump sum that may be provided.
72. The Court cannot make a Special Guardianship Order in the absence of the SGSP.
73. The Special Guardianship Support Plan will be co-authored by the Norfolk's Kinship Assessment Social Worker and the child's Allocated Social Worker to ensure reflection is made on the needs and capacity of the child and the Special Guardians.
74. The Special Guardianship Support plan must be agreed by Norfolk Adoption and Kinship Support Team.
75. A SGSP should always be completed alongside, and assessment save for a testing out period in proceedings when a SGSP will be completed when the child is placed.

What is included in a Special Guardianship support plan

The child's legal status

The child's details

The details of the special guardian

The details of the birth parents

Other people who are important to the child

Professionals and organisations involved with the child

The needs of the child

The Plan for financial support (where eligible)

(See Norfolk Children's Policy for Means Testing and Financial Support.)

Legal cost

76. Where the Special Guardianship Assessment recommends a SGO Norfolk County Council offers a of sum £250 inclusive of VAT to seek legal advice regarding the order and support plan. £250 plus VAT is the usual amount of financial support. However, further financial support can be discussed with the locality team.
77. If the prospective special guardians are supported to seek a SGO by Children's Services financial support will be discussed and agreed.
78. After a SGO is granted Norfolk County Council will consider any future requests by the Special Guardian(s) for support with legal fees in respect of any future applications made by the child's parent or any other person with parental responsibility for the child upon receipt of a written request with an estimate of the legal fees. Currently (2022) the maximum amount Norfolk County Council will pay for this is £1500 inclusive of VAT. Additional funds could be provided in exceptional circumstances, this would be at the discretion of the Locality Head of Service. Any request for future legal fees MUST be agreed by the Norfolk Adoption and Kinship Support Team Manager.

Health

79. The child must be registered with the local GP near the Special Guardians home.
80. The child must be registered with a dentist.
81. The health needs of the child.
82. How the child's health needs will be met.

Education

83. The education provision the child attends.
84. The educational needs of the child.
85. How the child's educational needs will be met.

- 86.** Previously Looked After children are entitled to Pupil Premium Plus funding to support their emotional and social development, as well as their attainment. It is the Special Guardians responsibility to inform any school attends of their entitlement to Pupil Premium Plus. Furthermore, it is the Special Guardians responsibility to ensure the Pupil Premium Plus financial support package goes toward supporting the child's needs. If the child changes school the Special Guardian should inform the new school of this eligibility, to ensure the school can access additional funding.
- 87.** If the child requires additional support, including an Education, Health and Care Plan, the school will access this in the same way as for any other pupil. As a holder of parental responsibility, the Special Guardian can request an Education, Health and Care needs assessment. If an application is made for an Education, Health and Care Plan, the child's parents would be consulted, as well as the Special Guardian, although the Special Guardian will retain overriding parental responsibility in respect of decision making.
- 88.** If the child was a Looked After Child, the Special Guardians can seek advice and support from Norfolk Virtual Schools at: [Support for children previously in care.](#)
- 89.** For all other children the special guardian will be signposted to refer to the school.

Support for the child's education post-18 will be as for any other child, plus the child and/or the carers can contact Norfolk Children's Services for advice or assistance as a Qualifying Care Leaver.

Therapy/counselling/advice/information

- 90.** Due to guidance from the Department of Education children who have been Looked After Children prior to the making of a Special Guardianship Order are entitled to an assessment by the Kinship Support Team regarding accessing therapeutic intervention for the child and/or the Special Guardians via the Adoption Support Fund. Norfolk Adoption and Kinship Support Team have to adhere to the rules and boundaries set by The Adoption Support Fund which currently (2022) entitles each child to access up to £5000 per year towards therapeutic intervention. However, it is important to note that this is a government funded service and is reviewed every year by the Government, this service could be withdrawn by the Government; meaning the intervention would not be available [Adoption support fund \(ASF\).](#)
- 91.** For all other children the special guardian will be signposted to discuss concerns with the child's GP.

Contact with birth parents/siblings/other member of the family/friends

- 92.** Special guardians make decisions around the child's contact regarding people who are special to him/her subject to any order made by the Court. The special guardians must agree to listen to the wishes and feelings of the child and make child centered decisions around contact arrangements. If the special guardians have any concerns or questions about the child's contact with birth parents, siblings or extend family they can contact the Kinship Support Service on cs.kinshipteam@norfolk.gov.uk or 01603 224131 (currently open Monday to Friday 9am-12pm UK times).

93. Birth parents and extend family can seek advice regarding contact from the Kinship Support Service on cs.kinshipteam@norfolk.gov.uk or 01603 224131 (currently open Monday to Friday 9am-12pm UK times).
94. If the child is ill and not able to attend contact the special guardians will inform the birth parents at the earliest opportunity.
95. Special Guardians we need to make child centered decisions for the child regarding contact with the people who are important to him/her through his/her minority. The contact arrangements for the child may change as they begin to experience contact and as they become older. It is important that the special guardians) reflect on the child's wishes and feelings in relation to contact.
96. If there needs to be any changes to contact the special guardians can make the changes in the child's best interest. The special guardians and/or the birth parents can seek advice and support from the Kinship Support Team, as stated above.
97. Norfolk Adoption and Kinship Support Team do not fund, facilitate or manage any supervised contact.

Support plan for leaving care

98. If the child or young person was a Looked After Child prior to the making of the Special Guardianship Order, the child may be entitled to Leaving Care Services as a Qualifying Care Leaver (s.24 CA1989). This will be based on the Leaving Care legislation and Norfolk County Council policy at the time the child turns 16. Please see Norfolk County Council's Policy for detailed Leaving Care services.

Support plan for ongoing support for Norfolk County Council

99. The special guardians will be able to access all Norfolk's Adoption and Kinship Support Team offer use of the Kinship Information Hub website, a dedicated online resource for all Norfolk Special Guardians. The Hub will be a one-stop shop for up-to-date information including the groups and services offered by the team, as well as a place for carers to connect with other special guardians via forums. If you follow the link below you can put in your details and request access. The [**Norfolk Kinship Service Hub**](#) is the Kinship Support Team's primary method of informing Special Guardians about the services it provides.
100. The Special Guardians will be able to access the Kinship Support Team advice line for advice, assistance and support:
01603 224131 (currently open Monday to Friday 9am-12pm UK times).
Email – cs.kinshipteam@norfolk.gov.uk

At present the Norfolk's Adoption and Kinship Support Team offer support groups for Special Guardians, this can provide networking with other guardians and will allow the special guardians to make use of Kinship Support Team members. The Special Guardian can register for this by emailing cs.kinshipteam@norfolk.gov.uk.

If the child moves outside of Norfolk with his/her Special Guardians, Norfolk's Adoption and Kinship Support Team must be informed. If the child was looked after by Norfolk County Council at the point of the Special Guardianship Order being made, it is Norfolk's responsibility to provide the agreed support services for a period of three years after which time the support transfers to the Local Authority the Special Guardian and the child reside. The Special Guardians need to inform their new Local Authority that a previously Looked After Child now lives within the County/Borough and the new County/Borough will take over the service provision after three years.

Norfolk Children's Services suggest that Special Guardians make a legally valid will, in case they are unable to care for the child or upon their death. The Special Guardian may name a Testamentary Guardian in a will and, in the event of the death of the Special Guardian, the Testamentary Guardian will acquire parental responsibility for the child. While the Special Guardian holds pre-eminent parental responsibility for the child, a Testamentary Guardian would hold equal parental responsibility to the child's parents. In the event of the Special Guardian dying or becoming incapacitated, the Kinship Team can provide support. The Special Guardian or Testamentary Guardian is expected to inform Norfolk County Council of any significant changes for the child.

Monitoring, reviewing and management by Norfolk County Council

- 101.** This Support Plan must agree by the Kinship Support Team Manager.
- 102.** The date of the first review of the SG Support Plan.
- 103.** This Special Guardianship Support Plan will be monitored by the Kinship Support Team, the team can be contacted via cs.kinshipteam@norfolk.gov.uk or 01603 224131.
- 104.** The support plan will be reviewed by the Local Authority on an annual basis.
- 105.** An earlier review may be held if the Local Authority considers it appropriate.
- 106.** An earlier review may be requested if the circumstances of the Special Guardian(s) or the child change or requested by the Special Guardian at any stage.

Planning for possible situations for the special guardians

Norfolk Children's Services suggest that Special Guardians make a legally valid will, in case they are unable to care for the child on their death. The Special Guardian may name a Testamentary Guardian in a will and, in the event of the death of the Special Guardian, the Testamentary Guardian will acquire parental responsibility for the child. While the Special Guardian holds pre-eminent parental responsibility for the child, a Testamentary Guardian would hold equal parental responsibility to the child's parents. In the event of the Special Guardian dying or becoming incapacitated, the Kinship Team can provide support. The Special Guardian or Testamentary Guardian is expected to inform Norfolk County Council of any significant changes for the child.

Legal advice for prospective special guardians

- 107.** Norfolk County Council considers it appropriate to contribute to the legal costs of the prospective Special Guardian(s) in Public Proceedings associated with the making of the Special Guardianship Order up to the sum of £250 inclusive of VAT (this is the standard amount and has to be paid by locality).
- 108.** The prospective Special Guardians must seek legal advice on the Special Guardianship Support Plan.
- 109.** Any further requests regarding the Special Guardianship Support Plan from the prospective Special Guardians must be discussed and agreed with Norfolk's Adoption and Kinship Support Team.
- 110.** If details are not in the support plan Norfolk Adoption and Kinship Team cannot adhere to requests.
- 111.** The special guardian may be able to access further support and funding via different routes, such as referring into CADS. Services may be available based on the needs of the child and not because the child is subject to an SGO.
- 112.** It is at the discretion of the Locality Head of Service in discussion with Norfolk Adoption Service and Kinship Support Head of Service if any financial support or contribution will be made to the prospective Special Guardians in Private Proceedings.
- 113.** If Norfolk County Council do not agree with the making of a Special Guardianship Order Norfolk County Council will not provide any contribution to legal costs.
- 114.** After an SGO is granted Norfolk Adoption and Kinship Support Team will consider any future requests by the Special Guardian(s) for support with legal fees in respect of any future applications made by the child's parent or any other person with parental responsibility for the child upon receipt of a written request with an estimate of the legal fees. The maximum amount Norfolk County Council will pay for this is £1,500 inclusive of VAT. Any request for future legal fees MUST be agreed by the Norfolk's Adoption Service and Kinship Support Head of Service.