



What does Special Guardianship mean for you and your family?

A Guide for Children and Young People already living in the household

Guide to Special Guardianship Orders

If you are reading this guide, then it means that the adult you are living with has asked to be considered as a Special Guardian for a child or young person who may already live with you. Or, they may be living somewhere else and it is being suggested that they come and live with you.

This guide will give you more information about what a Special Guardianship Order is and what this will mean for you and your family.



What are Special Guardians and Special Guardianship Orders?

Special Guardians are adults who care for children and young people in their home. The Special Guardianship Order lasts until that child is 18 years of age and so the Special Guardian remains their Special Guardian until then. Only a Court can make a Special Guardianship Order. The Court that makes the decisions is called a Family Court; this will be explained later in the guide.

If things change and the child doesn't live with you anymore, then it is only the Court who can cancel (revoke) a Special Guardianship Order.

Special Guardianship is a way of giving a child and young people a safe and secure family life while they are growing up. The Order is made where that child cannot be cared for anymore by their parents.



Why a Special Guardianship Order?

There are a lot of reasons why children and young people cannot live with their parents. For example:

- Some parents just find it too hard to be parents and even with support, they are not able to give the child what they need.
- Some parents cause harm to their children.
- Where parents have asked a relative or close friend to look after their children and this might be because they are ill or have other problems.
- Where the children's parents have died.

Special Guardianship is a legal way for the child's foster carers, relatives or other important people being allowed to care for them. This means that they would care for the child until they grow up and are able to leave home.



What a Special Guardian will do?

A Special Guardian will be expected to look after children and young people until they are an adult (legally they will become an adult when they are 18 years of age). The Special Guardian takes on all the legal responsibilities of parenting the child and young person until their 18th birthday.

The Special Guardian will make most of the important decisions, for example:

- What school the child / young person will go to.
- Who they have contact with.
- Decisions about their health and treatment.



There are some things that a Special Guardian is not allowed to do and they are:

- Changing the child / young person's name unless their parents or the Court gives permission.

What will change?

The main thing that will change for you is that you know the child / young person will be staying with you until they are at least 18 years of age.

They may already be living with you and so not much will change, except that you will know that they will be staying with you and they won't have to move.

They might not be living with you and so the adults will make sure you have the chance to get to know them before they move to live with you.

Sometimes the child / young person has mixed feelings about staying with you. It may be a very confusing time for them. You could also have mixed feelings about them staying and it can be confusing for you as well. It's important that you tell people how you are feeling so that any concerns / worries you have can be sorted.



Who is your adult considering being a Special Guardian to?



What would you want the child / young person to know about you?



What would you like to know about the child/ young person?

What questions do you have? What would you like to know more about?



What is going to happen next?

Who will organise the Special Guardianship Order?

Social Workers work with the child / young person, their parents and your family to work out the best plan for that child.

It's likely that a Social Worker will want to speak to you to find out how you feel about the child coming to live with you and what a Special Guardianship Order will mean for the child, the adults you live with and you.

Social Workers work for the Council's Children's Services and help children and young people when there are serious problems. This sometimes means finding a safe place for the young person to live.



You can write the name of the social worker here who is involved:



The social worker is.....

Their telephone number is.....

Their email is.....

The Social Worker can answer questions that you might have.

Have a think! Is there anything you would like to ask the Social Worker?

Space to write down any questions you have 	Answers to your questions 

It is very important that you tell someone how you feel so they can do something about it.

What about Contact?



Some children and young people keep in contact with their family after a Special Guardianship Order is made.

Contact can happen in different ways. Sometimes it is by letters and sometimes it is meeting up with their family to have contact.

Contact is about keeping in touch but it must be done in a way that children and young people are safe.

If you have any questions about contact, then please ask the Social Worker who is involved.

Now you know more about what a Special Guardianship Order is, what do you think about a Special Guardianship Order being made?



Where will the decision be made?



The Court is where important decisions like this are made and the Judge is a person who makes these decisions. The Court where these decisions are made is different to where people go if they have done bad things. This Court is called a Family Court. The meetings with the Judge are private, which means the only people who can go into the Court room are those agreed by the Judge.

The Court will tell a different kind of Social Worker, called a Children's Guardian, to talk to all of the adults and children. They may want to talk to you. The Guardian will talk to you about what you want the Judge to know about how you feel about the plans. This information will help the Judge to make a decision if a Special Guardianship Order should be made.

Not everybody can become a Special Guardian. Social Workers and Judges have to be sure that the people who want to become Special Guardians can look after children and young people properly, so they ask them lots of questions and look into how the adults have lived and how they care for their own children.

If the Judge is happy with what they are told, all their questions have been answered and that children and young people will be safe and happy with the adult(s) who want to be their Special Guardian(s), then they will make the Special Guardianship Order.

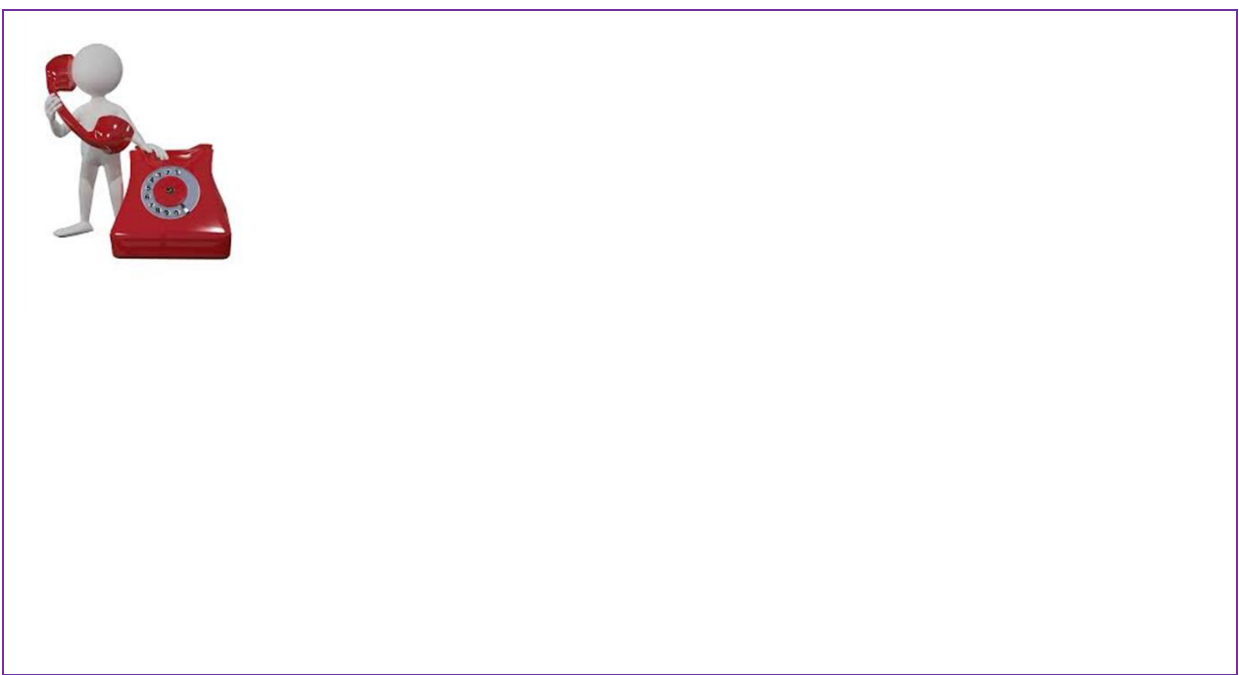


What happens if I am not happy about this?



If you do not feel happy about the plan being talked about and do not want a Special Guardianship Order to be made, then please speak to the Social Worker, the adult you live with or someone else that you trust. This can be a time when everything feels confusing. It's normal not to be sure about things, which is why the adults around you need to make sure you know who you can speak to and who will be there to help you.

It's important that you know who you can talk to and so write down the contact details of adults who you think could help you work through how you feel.



Other useful contact numbers;

The Children's Commissioner for England

The Children's Commissioner for England promotes and protects children's rights in England. The Commissioner does this by listening to what children and young people say about what matters to them and making sure adults in charge take their views and interests into account. Contact details are:

The Office of the Children's Commissioner

Sanctuary Buildings

20 Great Smith Street

London

SW1P 3BT

Tel: 020 7783 8330

Email: info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

Below are some organisations where there are people who will listen to what you have to say and help you sort out problems. Telephone calls are free, so you can call them from any telephone, including a public telephone box.

Childline

This is a special 24 hour helpline for children who are in trouble or at risk of being hurt or abused. Call free on **08001111** or you can find them on a computer, www.childline.org.uk

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children – NSPCC

If you are experiencing a bad time at home, or being bullied at school or scared about something, you can ring the NSPCC free on **08008005000** or you can find them on a computer on www.nspcc.org.uk

What about after the Special Guardianship Order is made?

The address of your local Team who can provide advice and guidance about things to do with Special Guardianship Orders is:

North Lincolnshire Adoption and Fostering Service

Church Square House

30 – 40 High Street

Scunthorpe

North Lincolnshire

DN15 6NL

Telephone: 01724 297024

If you would like some help or have any worries, then please ring us (or ask your Special Guardian to) on **01724 297024** and we will arrange to come and see you. Ask to speak to the Duty Social Worker.

Making a Complaint

If you are really unhappy with the Adoption and Fostering Service and you have tried to tell us but you don't think that it has been sorted, then you can contact the Complaints Person and she is called Julie Pinton. Contact details are:

**The Complaints Representations Manager
North Lincolnshire Council
People Directorate
Hewson House
Station Road
Brigg
North Lincolnshire
DN20 8XJ**

Telephone Number 01724 296487

If you remain unsatisfied with our response, you may wish to contact the **Local Government Ombudsman on 0300 061 0614.**

This information in this guide can be made available in other languages, in large print, Braille or on audiotape. Please phone **01724 297024** if you need any of these or any other help to access North Lincolnshire's services.