

Information leaflet

How to access support services

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 states that local authorities are required to make arrangements for provision of special guardianship support services.

What these support services should look like is set out in the Special Guardianship Regulation 2005 and include:

- Financial support
- Services to allow all people involved in the child's life to discuss matters relating to the order
- Assist with contact arrangements
- Services to meet the child's therapeutic needs
- Respite care
- Counselling, advice and information

Access to these support services is not automatic but is dependent on an assessment of your support needs. These support services are usually managed within the team your local authority has in place for Adoption Support. The team is usually called the 'Adoption Support Team' but some are known as the 'Kinship Support Team', 'Family Placement Team' or 'Post Adoption Support Team'.

To find out what the team is called your area contact your local Families Information Service or call your local authority.

The level and type of support that you receive can be influenced by a number of factors as discussed in the follow sections.

Previously 'looked after' children (and what happens if your child wasn't)

In some cases children who are the subject of an Special Guardianship Order (SGO) may have been previously 'looked after' by the local authority. If this was the case, and your young person is now aged between 16 and 21 they may qualify for advice and assistance under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

The 2017 Special Guardianship Guidance to local authorities states that parents, children and special guardians must receive an assessment for special guardianship support services if the child has been previously 'looked after'.

The guidance suggests that young people made subject to SGO's who were not previously 'looked after' should not be disadvantaged. In many cases the only reason that the child was not 'looked after' is because a relative stepped in quickly to take on the responsibility of the child. For this reason children who were not 'looked after' should be offered an assessment. If you do not get one the local authority should write to tell you why. Receiving an assessment does not automatically mean support will be provided.

The Special Guardianship Support Plan

If an assessment says support is required, a plan should be drafted detailing what support the local authority will provide. It should include:

- What services are to be provided
- How they'll know if the support has been successful
- When it'll be provided and for how long
- How they'll make decisions regarding whether the support should continue and
- The person responsible for looking after and helping to arrange the support.

The plan must be written in a way that everyone involved understands what it means.

It should also be reviewed at least once a year and again when your circumstances change. The criteria for the review should be the same as the initial assessment – meaning that essentially you should be re-assessed.

If the local authority wants to change or remove anything they have to give you notice so you're able to make a formal statement and share your opinion first.

Adoption Support Fund

The Adoption Support Fund was set up to help pay for essential therapy services for adoptive families and has since been extended to special guardian families where the child was previously 'looked after'.

The fund is available to children and young people up to and including the age of 18 (or 25 if the young person has an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC)).

To access the fund you will need to speak to your local authority support team. Your child will be assessed and if it is thought support would be beneficial a social worker can make an application to the Adoption Support Fund on your behalf. For three years after the SGO was made this is the responsibility of the local authority who placed the child with you and after three years it falls to the local authority where you live.

Support available through the fund varies across local authorities but examples of what may be available include:

- Theraplay
- Creative therapy
- Parenting training
- Non- Violent Resistance (NVR)
- Sensory integration therapy
- Psychotherapy
- Life story work

Key points

- To find out what your support team is called in your area contact your local Families Information Service or call your local authority.
- If your young person was previously 'looked after' and is aged between 16 and 21 they may qualify for advice and assistance under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.
- Parents, children and special guardians must receive an assessment should be offered. If you do not get one your local authority should write to tell you why.
- Receiving an assessment does not automatically mean support will be provided.
- If an assessment says support is required a plan should be drafted and detailing what support the local authority will provide
- The Adoption Support Fund is now available to special guardianship families where the child was previously 'looked after'. You will need to speak to your support team to access

Useful links title

Family Rights Group (FRG)

www.frg.org.uk

Tel: 0808 801 0366

FRG work with parents in England and Wales whose children are in need, at risk or are in the care system and members of wider family who are raising children unable to remain at home. FRG can provide legal advice where a child was 'previously looked after'



Young Minds

www.youngminds.org.uk

Tel: 0808 802 5544

Young Minds is a leading charity that provides information, advice and support for young people about their mental health and wellbeing.

Family Action Head Office 24 Angel Gate, City Road, London, EC1V 2PT

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