

Information leaflet

Relationship management

Becoming a special guardian can have a huge impact on someone's personal relationships and family dynamics. It is important that special guardians are aware of these changes and understand that it is normal for issues to arise and realise that it will take time for things to settle and for a new routine to be established.

A child under a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) can have challenges forming relationships with adults and other children within their new special guardianship family and special guardians will have to be supported to reflect on how their own role has changed within their family.

Family relationships

Often in cases of special guardianship a child can gravitate towards and show more affection and attention to one adult which can be a source of jealousy and friction in a relationship. In some cases the child may even try to play adults off against one another in the hopes of securing an advantage.

Although this can be difficult, special guardians should bear in mind that this is perfectly natural. It is important that all adults with active roles in the child's life have an agreed and consistent approach towards the child. If a special guardian has a partner then it is important that they work as a couple and can be seen as a unit and show the same responses in terms of rewards and discipline.

Contact with the birth parents and siblings might also be taking place and it is important that special guardians have considered how this might affect their relationships with their child.

Problems can also arise when a child is coming to live in a home where other children are already present. It is important that the new child coming in experiences the same rules and boundaries and affection given to the other children. In turn it is important that a special guardian's own children do not feel forgotten or that the special guardianship child is being unduly favoured.

It is important for special guardian families to spend time together and grow and develop their relationships. Over time trust will build and relationships will evolve. Once the child is comfortable they should spend quality time alone with each adult in the family and time should be spent together as a family.

It might be worth looking for family events where special guardians can meet others in similar situations. Local authorities might offer family days in the summer for special guardian families or see our list of useful links below for charities that offer events.

Key points

- Family relationships and dynamics are going to change and it will take time for things to settle and for a new routine to be established.
- Special guardian children have a lot of changes to deal with but it is important that special guardians do not forget how the changes are affecting their own children.
- Time spent one-to-one and together as a family is important.

Useful links

Family Mediation Council

www.familymediationcouncil.org.uk

The Family Mediation Council promotes best practice in family mediation to ensure families can confidently access high quality mediation services. Their website provides detailed information about the practicalities of mediation and also offers a local service finder.

National Family Mediation (NFM)

www.nfm.org.uk

Tel: 0300 4000 636

NFM delivers family mediation through affiliated members in over 500 locations across England and Wales. Their website explains how mediation works and provides a local service finder.

Siblings Together

www.siblings-together.co.uk

Tel: 020 7394 8708

Siblings Together is a UK charity that promotes positive contact between brothers and sisters separated in special guardianship, foster care, kinship care, residential care, or adoption. They run monthly activity days, residential camps, creative workshops and trips to give separated siblings a chance to spend time together engaged in enjoyable activities.

Grandparents Plus

www.grandparentsplus.org.uk

Tel: 0300 123 7015

Grandparents Plus hold an annual celebration day to offer kinship carers and their children the chance to meet others in a similar situation, share their experiences and have fun together.

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