

# SGO

Special Guardianship Order



## Special Guardianship Support Our Offer of Support to you and your family

### Office Hours Telephone Support

We understand that many families care for the children they look after very well and they only ask for support when they really need it. We also understand that you may come across situations whereby you want to ask a question about something in particular to reassure yourself. Whether you need support or have a question we have a dedicated phone number that Special Guardians can contact and speak to a member of staff.



SGO team can be contacted on: **Tel:** 01922 652680  
**Email:** [ConnectedCarersSGODutyTeam@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:ConnectedCarersSGODutyTeam@walsall.gov.uk)

### SGO newsletters

SGO newsletters are sent quarterly and aims to keep you updated on any new local support services or wider support available. It is also a reminder that SGO support is available from the local authority. If you provide your email address you will also be emailed any information that we think may be helpful for you to know as a special guardian.

### Support with Family Time

It's important that children see their parent/s but at times this can be challenging and you may need support. We can offer advice and guidance when required and if necessary organise a family meeting to see how best family time can be progressed. On some occasions children are unable to see their parents. In these instances, we can offer guidance in relation to writing letters and sharing these with the child/ren. We also offer a confidential post-box service if there are risks associated with a parent knowing where you live.



**Walsall Council**

## Financial Support Commitment



Walsall Council acknowledge that caring for somebody else's children is often not a planned event and therefore few families would have budgeted for these unexpected life events. Many families find that they have fixed income and often have financial commitments to other dependents as well. Walsall Council provide an approach to financial support which means that there is no disincentive for you to care for the child/ren in your care. What this means in real terms is the following:

- We will undertake a financial assessment and calculate your income and expenditure.
- We do this so we can see if there are any other welfare benefits that you could be claiming and if so how much this is likely to be.
- Once we have done this we will show you the financial outcome in simple terms.

If you meet the criteria we are committed to providing financial support until the young person is 18 years of age and you will receive a letter stating what exactly has been agreed. Any financial support package agreed will also be included in the SGO Support Plan.

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## Educational Support – Pupil Premium



Education is very important for the child/ren you care for. As part of our offer you will have:

- Access to a virtual school where you can seek advice and support
- Pupil Premium Plus £2,530 per year (as of July 2023) of the school to use
- One identified place for you to seek advice for children, young people and adults aged 0-25 with special educational needs and disabilities advice and support service (SENDIASS) this is a local offer within Walsall
- Early years funding is an entitlement for 15 hours nursery funding from the term date following the child's 2nd birthday.
- Early Years Pupil Premium- 3 and 4- year-old children could receive an additional 15 hours of funded early education a week, on top of the current entitlement of 15 hours for all 3/ 4 year olds. (term following 3rd birthday)
- Priority for the child/ren you care for with school admissions (for children previously looked after by the Local Authority).



## Legal Support

We understand that it is important for you to be able to seek independent legal advice from a qualified solicitor who will be able to answer any questions that you have before you progress with a Special Guardianship order.

We also acknowledge that parents may in the future not be happy with decisions that you make and in response they may make an application to the court to challenge your care or the contact arrangements. In response to the above we will provide the following:

- Financial support for you to speak with a qualified solicitor to answer any questions you may have.
- With agreement by Walsall Council £1500 for occasions when parents seek to challenge you.
- Our duty line to answer any additional questions that you may have that you are unsure about.

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## Ongoing training



Special Guardians have access to a vast programme of online and face to face training, including access to the Training Hub which has 100's of courses available. This is the same training hub which is offered to Walsall Foster Carers. There is no charge for these training courses and you can continue to develop your skills and expand your knowledge.

You can contact the SGO duty line and speak to a member of staff about your training needs. We will also be able to offer advice regarding specific courses which we consider you may benefit from. Support can also be provided with behaviour management. This may be via telephone advice or a home visit if required. We may also refer onto relevant agencies or

recommend training courses to assist you with this. We will identify if your support plan needs updating at this time.

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## Review of support plans



It may be that the support plan that you have continues to meet yours and child/ren's needs, however, should you require a review, you can contact the SGO duty team at any point to request this.

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## Assessment for Therapeutic services

In many instances support can be accessed via your GP who will make referrals to CAMHS and other services in your local area, however at times the child/ren that you care for may require specialist support from a qualified clinician.

The Adoption Support Fund (ASF) provides funds to Local Authorities to pay for essential therapeutic services for eligible Special Guardianship Order families where the child has been looked after by the Local Authority immediately before the Special Guardianship Order was made, or they were looked after prior to a Child Arrangement Order being made, to enable the Special Guardianship assessment to be completed.

The current maximum funding allocation for each child is:

- £2500 per child per year for a specialist assessment
- £5000 per child per year for therapy

A worker from the SGO team will be able to provide further advice regarding this or you can visit <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/adoption-support-fund-asf> where more detailed information can be found.



## Leaving Care Support

Depending on the child's circumstances and the time they spent in care, the law describes four different groups of care leaver:

- Eligible child
- Relevant child
- Former relevant care leaver
- Qualifying care leaver



## Independent Support

In Walsall we have commissioned in services from the Kinship Care Charity (previously known as Grandparents Plus) which supports both Connected Carers and Special Guardians.

Kinship Care Charity offer – 1:1 dedicated project worker, support groups, days out, 1:1 emotional and practical support, access to their advice team, access to food banks, free training/workshops, applications for grants and funding (e.g. for school uniform, white goods, bedroom furniture, equipment etc.). Project worker can also attend meetings as a source of support and where necessary signpost/refer to other services.

Visit the Kinship Care Charity website to find out more - <https://kinship.org.uk/>

All children who were looked after prior to the making of a special guardianship order will be classed as a 'qualifying child' between the ages of 16-21. This entitles them to support and advice from the Walsall Leaving Care Team and may include a pathway plan if required. Key assistance offered includes support around welfare benefits and housing, support in respect of education, training and employment.

For more information and advice regarding leaving care services please visit: <https://coramvoice.org.uk/myrights/all-you-need-to-know-about-leaving-care/i-am-care-leaver/>

Walsall's Leaving Care Service can be contacted on: Transition and Leaving Care Hub, Brineton Street, Walsall, WS2 9EP. 01922 650 555 (option 2).

# Contact us

Walsall SGO Support Hub

Tel: 01922 652680

Email: [ConnectedCarersSGODutyTeam@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:ConnectedCarersSGODutyTeam@walsall.gov.uk)

Should you require assistance out of hours, the number to call is **0300 555 2922**.

