

Special Guardian Support Team

Who we are?

The Special Guardian Support Team is committed to providing support to Special Guardians who live within the borough of Torfaen.

Our service runs five days per week Mondays to Thursdays 8.30am-5pm and Fridays 8.30am-4.30pm. We are always on hand to provide support and guidance to people who have been granted a Special Guardianship Order for a child in their care.

About Our Team

The team consists of two Community Support Workers, who have a range of relevant skills and qualities to support Special Guardians.

There is also an Assistant Team Manager who is a qualified Social Worker and has many years' experience working with Children and Families Teams.

The support services are overseen by a Team Manager, whose background is in statutory children and family's services and has joint responsibility with another Team Manager for the Placement Team.

How to access the Team?

A Special Guardian can self-refer to the support team by contacting the team on:

Tel: **01495 766697** or E-mail: **SGOSupportTeam@torfaen.gov.uk**.

A Special Guardian can also be referred by the child/young person's Social Worker and discussions can take place around the support a Special Guardian requires.

The Special Guardian Support Team is a flexible service, and a Special Guardian can opt in and out of the support service at any time throughout the duration of the Special Guardianship Order being in place.

What support do we provide?

Direct Work Support

The support team can be on hand for advice and assistance during office hours. The team can support with a one-off situation or query, or they can assist with providing direct support through more difficult or challenging times. This support could be face to face, or telephone support.

Signposting to other agencies

The support team can also signpost a Special Guardian to other local services that may be able to help, for example, Benefit Advice, Families First, Flying Start and housing related support.

Supportive, fair, effective...

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Financial Support

A Special Guardian may be entitled to financial support, which is considered as part of a means tested financial assessment. This assessment is reviewed annually or if a Special Guardian's financial situation changes. Payments will stop once the Special Guardianship Order ceases, when a child is 18, their care arrangements change or if they enter full time employment. In addition to the financial support from the Local Authority, a Special Guardian can also apply for child benefits and maybe entitled to tax credits – the Special Guardianship Support Team can assist with this, if needed.

Multi-agency Support

The support team can assist and support during multi-agency meetings such as Special Guardianship Order reviews/ Supervision Order Reviews and also liaise with agencies such as housing or education.

Other Social Care Support

A Special Guardian and the child(ren) in their care could also benefit from other support that the Local Authority offers to all families in Torfaen. Some examples are the, **Rapid Response Team**, **Family Intervention** support and the **Family Resource Team**. This would be assessed through a Care and Support Assessment in which Special Guardians can request through the **Multi Agency Support and Safeguarding Hub (MASSH)**. The support team can help you make a referral; however, it will be the decision of that particular Team as to whether they will offer any support.

Birth Family/Contact Support

Advice, support and guidance can be offered in relation to issues surrounding birth family relationships and/or family time issues.

The Local Authority can offer a Family Group Conference which can be facilitated through the **Family Resource Team** for a Special Guardian having difficulties with birth family relationships and family time.

Training

Every Special Guardian will be encouraged to take part in online training which they can access through the Local Authority's **Organisational Development Team**. The support team can assist with setting this up and booking you onto relevant training programmes.

A Special Guardian can also access training provided by the MyST (therapeutic support team) and the Fostering Network.

Therapeutic Support

The support team also have access to the Community Psychology Team, the SPACE Wellbeing Panel and a Psychology Advice line.

Support Group and Peer Support

There is currently a monthly, virtual support group that takes place for all special guardians. The support team can also put the special guardian in contact with another special guardians for invaluable peer support.

Leaving Care Support

Whilst a young person in a special guardianship arrangement is not eligible to enter post 18 living arrangements under the "When I'm Ready" scheme, even if they are living with their former foster parents before a special guardianship order is made; the support team work closely with the Torfaen Young People Support Service, who may be able to offer some support to certain children who have been subject to a Special Guardianship Order. This support would be subject to a further assessment, and it would be the decision of the TYPSS if they provide any ongoing support once a child is 18 years old.

Legal Advice

If birth parents challenge the Special Guardianship Order or the family time arrangements through the court process, the Local Authority will assist with paying legal costs (up to the legal aid rate.) Should a Special Guardian wish to revoke the Special Guardianship Order then they will be required to meet the legal cost that this will incur.

Out of hours Support

All Special Guardians can access the **Placement Team** out of hours telephone support service during an emergency or crisis situation, the Social Worker on duty will be able to offer the most appropriate telephone advice/support.