

Special Guardian Support Service

Introduction

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

Our service runs five days per week Monday to Friday, and 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

The support services are overseen by the Team Manager whose background is also in statutory children and families and also has the responsibility of the whole of the Family Placement Team.

What support do we provide?

Signposting to other agencies.

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

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 equally, they can assist with providing

direct support through more difficult or challenging times. This support could be face to face visit, or telephone support.

Financial Support.

Special Guardians may also be entitled to financial support, which is considered as part of a means tested financial assessment, this is reviewed annually, and any payments will stop once the Special Guardianship Order expires. In addition to the financial support from the LA, Special Guardians 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 and also liaise with agencies such as housing or education.

Other Social Care Support....

Special Guardians 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 Focus Team
- Family Resource Team.

This would be assessed through a Care and Support Assessment in which Special Guardians can request through the Multi Agency Support Service Hub (MASSH). The support service can help you make a referral; however, it will be the decision of that particular service if 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 contact issues.

The Local Authority can offer Family Group Conference which can be offered through the Family Resource Team for Special Guardians having difficulties with birth family relationships and contact.

Training....

Every Special Guardian will be encouraged to take part in online training which they can access through the Local Authority's **Organisation 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 Fostering Networks

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 take place for all special guardians. The support team can also put the special guardian in contact with another special guardian's for invaluable peer support.

Leaving Care Support....

The support service 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 contact arrangements through the court process the Local Authority will assist with paying legal cost (up to the legal aid rate.)

Should the Special Guardian wish to revoke the Special Guardianship Order then they will be required to meet the legal cost that this will incur.

How to access the team?

Special Guardians can self-refer to the support team by contacting them on:

Tel: **01495 766697**

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

Special Guardians can also be referred by the child's Social Worker and discussions can take place around the support Special Guardians require.

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