



Family Connections Service (FCS)  
Post SGO Support Service  
November 2023

# Background

- The Family Connections Service was formed in August 2021.
- The service was created to ensure that a sole team manager had consistent oversight and to drive the expansion of the service to not only assess connected carers, but to provide post Special Guardianship Order support.
- The Post SGO Support Service was created in January 2023 following successful recruitment of an Assistant Team Manager, Social Worker and two Children and Families Support Workers.

# How many Special Guardians do we have in Hampshire?


- There are currently 884 children on a Special Guardianship Order in Hampshire.
- This only includes the children that we had involvement with either through care proceedings or assessing private SGO applicants.
- This does not include children from other LAs but resident in Hampshire that are eligible for Post Order support.
- In 2022, there were 69 SGOs granted.
- As of September, there have been 54 SGOs granted in 2023.

# Post SGO support

Under the Special Guardianship Regulations 2005, Local Authorities are required to make arrangements for the provision of special guardianship support services in their area to meet the needs of those affected by special guardianship. These services are defined as:

- Financial support
- Support groups for Special Guardians, parents and children under SGOs or being considered for an SGO.
- Support with managing contact including mediation services.
- Therapeutic services for the child under SGO.
- Support to build and maintain the relationship between the child and Special Guardian including training for the Special Guardian to meet the particular needs of the child.
- Counselling, advice and information.

# What we have implemented

- Special Guardians microsite in development, similar to: Guardians' Guide ([buckinghamshire.gov.uk](http://buckinghamshire.gov.uk))
  - Special Guardian communications
  - SGO support groups: There are now 5 face to face groups and two virtual groups that run every month
  - Drop in virtual clinics for Special Guardians and colleagues to receive individual advice/guidance
  - Monthly Lite Bite sessions; topics include contact, life story work, trauma, therapeutic parenting, attachment and ACES
  - Support with Education Planning Meetings
  - Mediation/support in relation to contact issues
  - Management of the Adoption Support Fund
  - Training to colleagues across the Local Authority
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# Adoption Support Fund

- Department for Education through the Adoption Support Fund, provides funds to local authorities and regional adoption agencies (RAAs) to pay for essential therapeutic services for eligible adoptive and special guardianship order (SGO) families.
- Children must have been previously looked after immediately prior to the SGO being granted to be eligible for ASF funding.
- In the financial year 2022/2023 there were 13 ASF applications for SGO families.
- The Post SGO Support Service has had responsibility for ASF applications for SGO families since January 2023.
- We have worked to raise awareness of the ASF for SGO families.
- To date, we have processed 40 applications for the 23/24 financial year.

# What's next?

- We are reviewing our staffing needs to ensure that we are able to meet all of our statutory responsibilities for Special Guardians in the future; we believe there will continue to be an increased need as the number of SGOs continues to grow.
- We will be working to develop earlier support for prospective Special Guardians, working alongside families and professionals in the early stages of PLO/Proceedings where an SGO may be a possible outcome, to ensure that robust support plans are enacted.
- We also want to continue to grow the service and expand the reach to more Special Guardians. We want to establish links with our colleagues in Education and Health to ensure that they are signposting Special Guardians to our service to access our support.