

North Yorkshire's Special Guardianship Information for Carers



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Information for Special Guardianship Carers

Special guardian carers have requested local authorities to provide information about where and how they can access information, support and services for the child they are caring for.

The carer often has a special guardianship support plan however, it is acknowledged that services and advice changes overtime, therefore this information is intended to make sure special guardians within North Yorkshire are kept up to date and are aware of what is available to them to assist them in their caring role.

North Yorkshire also has a special guardianship policy, which is available for carers to access via the North Yorkshire Council's website: Applications for Special Guardianship Orders.

What is a Special Guardianship Order?

A Special Guardianship Order is an order appointing a person or persons to be a child's special guardian. Special Guardianship offers an option for children needing permanent care with someone other than their birth parents.

It can offer a greater sense of stability and security for children whilst enabling them to maintain relationships with their family.



Who can apply?

Applications for Special Guardianship may be individual or joint applicants. Joint applicants do not need to be married. Special Guardians must be 18 or over.

The following persons may apply:

- Any guardian of the child;
- Where the child is subject of a Care Order, or an Interim Care Order, any person who has the consent of the Local Authority;
- A local authority foster carer who the child has lived for a period of at least a year immediately preceding the application;
- Anyone who is named in a Child Arrangements Order as a person with whom the child is to live;
- Anyone with whom the child has lived for three out of the last five years, providing the child has not ceased to live with the proposed applicant more than 3 months before the making of the application;
- Anyone who has the consent of all those with Parental Responsibility for the child;
- A relative with whom the child has lived for a period of at least one year immediately preceding the application
- Any other person (including the child and other than a parent) may apply for a Special Guardianship Order if he has obtained the leave of the court to make the application. If the Applicant is a child the court will only grant the order if it is satisfied that the child is satisfied that the child has the appropriate understanding to make the application.

Please note – Parents of a child may not apply to become their own child's Special Guardians.



What are the advantages of a Special Guardianship Order?

A Special Guardianship Order makes the care arrangements more legally secure than a Child Arrangement Order, and enables the child to maintain stronger links with their birth family than if they were adopted. It also allows SGO carers to have more control over decisions about the child's care, although parents retain some rights and responsibilities.

For older children, Special Guardianship Orders can strike the balance between their need for a safe, stable, caring home throughout their childhood and maintaining strong links with their parents. Under a Special Guardianship Order, the child is not looked after by the Local Authority therefore, carers can make all the day-to-day decisions. This will give more freedom to raise the child without having additional duties such as attending regular review meetings, annual health assessments, form filling and regular social work visits.

Legal Support

In respect of a child who is looked after by North Yorkshire Children's Services, where an assessment has confirmed this is the agreed plan, the department will support carers to seek legal advice and support the application of a Special Guardianship Order.

In pre proceedings, families may be supported by North Yorkshire Children's Services to seek legal advice regarding a Special Guardianship Order.



Financial Support

Special Guardians who have previously cared for the child or young person as a North Yorkshire Foster/ Connected Carer are entitled to receive the equivalent of the fostering allowance, which they were receiving before the Special Guardianship Order was made. This payment is guaranteed for a period of two years following the making of the Special Guardianship Order. At the end of this period, any ongoing financial support will be means tested, taking into account the income and outgoings of the Special Guardians.

North Yorkshire Council will review the means test for financial support on an annual basis. At the same time, a Social Worker (wherever possible one who already knows the child and the Special Guardians), will visit the home in order to assess whether any additional support needs have arisen over the previous year. Once this visit has been undertaken, the review of the financial means test will be completed for the coming year.

Adoption Support Fund (ASF)

Where a child or children were immediately looked after by the Local Authority prior to an Special Guardianship Order being granted. The carer can request an assessment of support needs relating to the child's early trauma experiences. If the outcome of this assessment is that there are needs that could be supported through a programme of therapy, an application can be made to the Adoption Support Fund. The worker who has undertaken the assessment will complete this.

There is specific criteria around what therapies are included. They do not include assessments or interventions that lie within the remit of Health Services. The ASF will fund a Specialist Assessment that meets all of the criteria below:

- An in-depth assessment of the child and family's needs with a focus on trauma and attachment and how this demonstrates the links to the assessment of support needs.
- Led and undertaken by a qualified clinician(s). (someone who diagnoses and treats patients; is suitably qualified, and is licensed to practice via a regulator such as the Health and Care Professional Council e.g. a trained Clinical Psychologist or Attachment Psychotherapist).
- Result in a therapeutic support plan for the child(ren) / family.

The following are not in scope of the Fund:

- Standalone assessments for single conditions, e.g. ADHD, FASD, autism, sensory integration, (unless they are part of a wider specialist assessment which meets the criteria for the Specialist Assessment FAL i.e. are in depth, covering trauma and attachment, led and undertaken by a qualified clinician and resulting in a therapeutic support plan).
- Standalone specialist assessments, including any baselining specialist assessments, are also out of scope of the Therapy Fair Access Limit.

The ASF is subject to the government's annual Spending Review.

To apply for an assessment of support needs, the Special Guardian is advised to contact North Yorkshire's Multi Agency Screening Team (MAST) and request an assessment of support needs. To be able to apply for ASF, the assessment must have been completed within three months of the request for funding and the sessions must start within three months of the funding being agreed.

North Yorkshire and the region have an Approved Providers list (APL) of therapists who North Yorkshire Council recommend to use.

Once a therapist has been identified, they need to provide a quote, which outlines the details of the therapy/assessment and a breakdown of all the costings and then an application can be made to the Adoption Support Fund.

The Adoption Support Fund will process the application in line with their current timescales and make a decision whether it is within the remit of the Fund. Once funding is approved, the Local Authority and the service provider will complete a 'Call off Agreement'.

Please note that no treatment/therapeutic assessment should start prior to any funding being approved.

Funding must be used within the financial year it was approved for and cannot be carried over. Any funding remaining must be returned to the ASF.

The therapeutic work must be reviewed by the family, the social worker or caseworker and the therapist at least every three months and the case must remain open whilst therapy is ongoing.

About The Share Foundation

It has been running the Department for Education's savings/investment schemes for looked after children and young people since 2012 (Junior ISAs since 2012 and Child Trust Funds since 2017).

The good news is that the Government has arranged for young people in care to have a special savings account called a Junior ISA or a Child Trust Fund and has put money aside to open it for the young person.

How the accounts work

The Junior ISA scheme for young people in care works as follows:

1. The Share Foundation opens an account for every child and young person under 18 throughout the United Kingdom who has been in care continuously for at least one year. Local authorities are required by Government to provide the Share Foundation with the necessary details so that we can open these accounts, drawing down £200 from the Department for Education.
2. The Share Foundation administer the accounts, which are held with selected Junior ISA providers
3. So that's the account open and £200 in it, but that's when the Share Foundation real work starts. There two big aims:

- to help the young people with these accounts to be better prepared for adult life, by providing guidance on handling money;
- to raise additional voluntary contributions to build the value of the accounts themselves.

Does the young person have an account?

- A large numbers of families and young people are unaware of their accounts. The Share Foundation are therefore undertaking a programme of general recovery for the scheme.
- They have now developed a simplified search process specially designed for young people born in the UK and aged 16 and over (but not before 1 September 2002) with the co-operation of HM Revenue & Customs, accessible via findCTF.sharefound.org.

Further information on the scheme and copies of all materials can be obtained from this website www.sharefound.org

You can call **01296 310400**, or write to:

**The Share Foundation,
PO Box 1172,
Aylesbury
HP20 9PG**



What other support is available?

North Yorkshire Children & Family Services will support Special Guardians in their caring role, through supporting them to access information and services who can advise and support as detailed below:

Educational Support from North Yorkshire Council – Achieving in Life (Virtual School)

The Virtual School has a statutory duty to provide advice, guidance and information to schools, parents/guardians and a range of professionals around improving the educational outcomes of children with Special Guardians.

Although Virtual School are not corporate parents for this group of children they will respond to parental / guardian requests for advice and information. Such as advice on school admissions in their area and sign-posting parents/guardians to other services that can offer advice and support. The Virtual School will also respond to requests for advice and information from education providers.

There is a Designated Teacher at every school, who should be the central point of contact within the school. The Designated Teacher should make themselves known to Special Guardians as someone they can talk to about issues affecting their child's education. Special Guardians should be encouraged to participate in discussions about their child's support needs and strategies to meet identified needs, including how the Pupil Premium Plus Grant can be used to support their child.

Admission authorities must give highest priority to children who live with Special Guardians. The admission requirements for children with Special Guardians are set out in the School Admissions Code. This Code applies to maintained schools and academies, including free schools. Please refer to the NYCC School Admissions page for further information.

For the latest up to date information please refer to our website cyps.northyorks.gov.uk/virtual-school.

For more information please see our FAQ about Previously Looked After Children below or contact the Virtual School.

Email: virtualschool@northyorks.gov.uk
or telephone: **01609 533231**.



Early Help Support

Early Help is the term used by all agencies to describe North Yorkshire's approach to providing early support to families and carers at any stage of a child's life when a problem or difficulty first arises. The key principles of the Early Help strategy "is to ensure children, young people and their families receive the right help, at the right time from the right service and most importantly, where possible, from the person they have an existing, positive relationship with".

When problems cannot be addressed by a single agency, North Yorkshire Council has an Early Help Team who work closely with families, schools, early year's settings, health teams and other key partners to provide additional support. They are available to provide support around behaviour, routines and boundaries or other difficulties that may arise.

The team understands that being a Special Guardian is often a challenging role but is key to providing children and young people with a happy and stable childhood. To support you in this role the Early Help Teams offer a number of virtual training sessions that Special Guardians can access including our Solihull Programme, which is a web-based programme of online courses.

Courses include:

- Understanding your baby
- Understanding your child
- Understanding your child with additional needs
- Understanding your teenagers brain
- Understanding your child's feelings

All courses are free and delivered on a modular basis, multiple family members and carers can complete the same course, which enables shared understanding of presenting issues and strategies for coping with difficult situations. To register visit www.inourpace.co.uk and apply the access code – NYFAMILIES. You will need to create an account, which will enable you to return to the course(s) at any time. There is also an advance section of training which special guardians can access, please enquiry with early help.

For more information on Early Help offer, contact your local team on:

Early Help Central (Selby, Hambleton, Richmondshire) **01609 534829**

Early Help West (Harrogate, Knaresborough, Ripon, Craven) **01609 534842**

Early Help East (Scarborough, Ryedale, Whitby) **01609 534852**

Multi Agency Support Team (MAST) Hub

If a Special Guardian requires advice around the following;

- Reassessment of a special guardianship allowance
- Support to apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment to help with rent shortfalls and paying rent;
- Debt advice
- Free school uniform.

And the child continues to live in North Yorkshire the Special Guardian will need to contact MAST on the Customer Service Centre, number 01609 780780. MAST will make a decision on next steps within one working day of receiving the information.

It is important that you provide enough information about your situation and your request to enable to MAST to make the best decision for your family.

Participation Team

There are lots of opportunities for young people in North Yorkshire to have their voices heard and help lead on change and improvement in the services we provide.

For children and young people who are living with Special Guardians our NY Care Champions group work together with the NY Voice team to make things better for children and young people in care, and care leavers. This could be organising campaigns on issues that are important to them, running events for other young people or working with on specific pieces of work to improve the support we offer. The group links directly with our senior leaders – who are in a position to make things happen based on what our young people are saying. Membership of the group is flexible, allowing members to be as involved as and when they want to be and with the different pieces of work. Transport can be provided, we also lots of fun and creative activities to keep young people interested.

For Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), our Flying High group provides a specific focus on improvement in the services we deliver in this arena, as well as the services delivered by other organisations and partners. The group provides a highly supportive structure and inclusive opportunities for young people with a range of additional needs to have their voices heard, and make a real difference. Of course, young people with SEND are more than welcome and

make a huge contribution to our many other groups, at which they are always very well represented!

Our Young Inspectors inspect NYCC services and produce reports on what is working well, and what needs to be improved from a young person's perspective. Amongst other things, our Young Inspectors might interview staff, speak to other young people, review websites, or observe practice. Young people in this group come from a real range of backgrounds, and we are especially keen to welcome young people with experience of working with our social care related teams into the group; as they have unique experience and a perspective which makes them perfectly placed to tell us what we can do better! All Young Inspectors receive training and certificates for their work with the team, making it not only fun and rewarding, but also something which looks great on things like job or university applications.

To make a difference in your area, our local Youth Councils are a great place to start. These groups are based around the County and are very much young person led. Each group has have a local outlook and the young people will decide themselves what they want to focus on, recent examples include work about the environment, mental health, and transport. We are currently in the process of linking our youth council members with their local county councillors to increase their influence in their local areas. Our local

Youth Councils are all represented on our county-wide Youth Cabinet group, an executive body which includes young people from all of our other voice groups and organises North Yorkshire wide campaigns and events.

For further details about opportunities for children and young people please contact the NY Voice Team at nyvoice@northyorks.gov.uk



Leaving Care Services NY Connect

Children aged 16 and not yet 21 who were looked after immediately before the making of the Special Guardianship Order will qualify for leaving care advice and assistance under Section 24 (1a) the Children Act 1989. The relevant Local Authority is the last one that looked after the child.

A young person can request support as a young person qualifying by contacting the Leaving Care Team or Customer Services at North Yorkshire Council.

As a qualifying young person, they may be able to access a small one off grant if they are enrolling on a Higher Education course. They may also be able to get additional support from their chosen university if they alert the university to their care experience.

There may also be some additional exemptions and welfare benefits as a qualifying young person. The Leaving Care Team and advice agencies can provide up to date information regarding this. Should confirmation be required that a young person is a young person qualifying the team can provide verification of this.

NY Connect

NY Connect enables families across North Yorkshire to find out about additional support which is available in your area. The website www.northyorkshireconnect.org.uk has various sections including information on activities, attractions, places to visit and education and learning.

Training Offer

Special Guardians will soon be able to access the same training that is available to foster carers. Training will be accessible via NYCC's Learning Zone and Special Guardian Carers will have their own activation access code to access the training available.

Training is offered as a mixture of online learning, webinars and in person training courses (Covid-19 permitting).

Please see the guide on how to register and book on to courses at admin.fosteringsouth@northyorks.gov.uk



Support Groups

SGO Support Groups usually run every 6 months. However if you would prefer to have them more frequently, this can be arranged. We hold them at your nearest Area Fostering Office.

The support groups last for two hours and are a great opportunity to meet up with other Special Guardianship carers. There will always be a fostering support worker or other support worker there to answer any questions you may have or to offer advice.

The Area Fostering Offices where the sessions are held are:

- Scarborough – North Yorkshire House
- Selby – Sandpiper House,
- Northallerton – White Rose House
- Knaresborough – Manor Road Children's Centre.

To find out more and register your interest please contact

Scarborough, Whitby, Ryedale –
AdminFosteringEast@northyorks.gov.uk
Tel. 01609 534678

Selby –
AdminFosteringEast@northyorks.gov.uk

Northallerton –
AdminFosteringNorth@northyorks.gov.uk
Tel. 01609 533799

Knaresborough –
AdminFosteringWest@northyorks.gov.uk
Tel. 01609 535216



Contact us

W: www.northyorks.gov.uk T: 0300 131 2 131

North Yorkshire Council, County Hall, Northallerton, North Yorkshire, DL7 8AD

You can request this information in another language or format at

www.northyorks.gov.uk/accessibility