

Special Guardianship Order (SGO) Service Development Overview – July 2023 – Appendix B

Key Element of a Special Guardianship Support Service (Kinship.org.uk)	Achieved this year	Current Offer	12 Month Action Plan
<p>An Understanding of the Need for Services</p>	<p>Consultation with local SGO support groups and young people living in SGO arrangements.</p> <p>Identified SGO development priority areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Support • Provision of information about SGO • Development of our preparation for SGO support offer • Robust SGO support arrangements once the Order has been granted • Development of swift family responses to SGO families in crisis and at risk of breakdown • Discussion of co-ordination of support from across Child and Family Services to families in crisis • Development of links with community projects offer additional support services <p>Improved quantitative information recording systems have been developed to help us understand the demand for SGO support services in Swansea.</p> <p>Agreement for increased staffing levels in FAFT to respond to the needs of SGO</p>	<p>The SGO service sits within Friends and Family Team (FAFT) which is a specialist Kinship Team.</p> <p>FAFT are reporting monthly upon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Guardians • Number of SGO assessments completed • Number of families subject to the Stability Protocol and meeting outcomes <p>FAFT engage and consult with Special Guardians via support groups and direct contact, to understand what matters to them.</p>	<p>Extend data capture to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages of children • Relationship to the children • Family Stability meetings and outcomes • Identified support needs <p>Undertake ongoing consultation with Guardians and children and young people in SGO arrangements around their experiences of assessment, support provided and what matters to them.</p> <p>Explore co-design opportunities with Guardians, children and young people in SGO arrangements to produce key information on SGO arrangements and support.</p>

	<p>families. The team will have an additional 6 support officers and 1 co-ordinator post which is due to be advertised.</p>		
<p>A Mechanism for Governance, Management and Service Planning</p>	<p>Development of draft SGO policy pack, annual declaration of support services and Service Action Plan (to be reviewed each year).</p> <p>Review of current SGO financial process and financial arrangements. This review has taken in to account the arrangements of Western Bay Adoption Service and Fostering Wales Swansea. SGO allowances were increased as a result of this review in April 2023.</p> <p>Engagement with Swansea Council's Welfare Rights Unit to ensure all Guardians have access to welfare rights information and support and that correct, appropriate, and manageable levels of financial support are offered to Guardian's in receipt of SGO allowances.</p> <p>Development of robust support plans and support offer for children living in SGO arrangements. As part of this, we took in to account the comparable challenges faced by both children living in SGO arrangements and children who are Looked After or Adopted.</p> <p>Policy development includes information on localised support on offer for children and Special Guardians</p> <p>Collaborative working with other Local Authorities to ensure SGO families can</p>	<p>Development of the SGO Volunteer Scheme with SCVS (Swansea Council for Voluntary Service) to provide additional support for families with an SGO arrangement.</p> <p>The SGO Support Panel includes representatives from Welfare Rights, Service Quality Unit and Finance to ensure robust and consistent support plans are produced which meet the children and Guardians' needs.</p>	<p>Completion, sign off and implementation of the new SGO Policy pack planned for Autumn 2023.</p> <p>Develop further joint working opportunities with Education, Health, and other partners to achieve a joint approach to supporting SGO families.</p> <p>FAFT to take forward further discussions around the 'transfer in / out' process with other Welsh Local Authorities to ensure a smooth and consistent approach for families.</p>

	access localised support pertinent to the area of their residence		
Information for and Communication with Guardians	<p>Development of a Specialist Kinship Support Officer role to facilitate support workshops for Guardians and works alongside the Volunteer Co-ordinator from Swansea Council for Voluntary Services (SCVS) as a link for SGO families to access additional support from volunteers.</p> <p>The Specialist Kinship Support Officer have developed and delivered SGO preparation workshops for anyone interested in Special Guardianship. A follow-up workshop has also been developed for Guardians who have had SGO awarded and require additional information and support.</p>	<p>Basic Information is available for prospective Special Guardians on the Swansea Council website which includes SGO FAQs.</p> <p>FAFT communicates via email and letter upon case transfer giving Guardians information including duty contact details for FAFT</p> <p>Ongoing timetable of SGO preparation and information workshops as per development activity. These workshops offer an opportunity for information sharing by the Local Authority and peer support.</p>	<p>Consultation with children, young people and Guardians to understand how they would like to receive information on SGO. One suggestion is the development of a website which would include resources and links to key organisations such as the Kinship and Family Rights group.</p> <p>Development of accessible information for Staff, Guardians and children and young people. This information would be informed by what matters to those in SGO arrangements and would include details of our Policies and available support.</p> <p>SGO support offer and financial arrangements to be reviewed and published annually.</p> <p>Development of information for social workers to use in direct work with children, young people and families to help prepare them for SGO and what the Order means for them.</p> <p>Review of other forms of communication used by FAFT e.g. email, text, letter.</p> <p>Create opportunities for current Special Guardians to support the</p>

			<p>facilitation of the preparation for, and post SGO, workshops.</p> <p>Newsletters to be formally extended to Guardians.</p> <p>FAFT Welcome Pack to be reviewed and re-designed.</p>
<p>Engagement and Consultation with Special Guardians</p>	<p>The Participation and Children’s Rights Officer has undertaken consultations with SGO Guardians and provided initial feedback to FAFT Deputy Manager.</p> <p>Guardians have been offered direct access to the FAFT team via a monthly SGO clinic at their community support group. This was created to provide additional opportunities for Guardian’s to gather information and address both general and family specific concerns.</p> <p>Development of regular drop-ins at local SGO support groups ‘Roots’ to build links with Guardians. The FAFT Deputy Team Manager and Support Officers have regularly attended this group to build relationships and alongside the Participation and Children’s Rights Officer have undertaken consultation activities with current families in SGO arrangements.</p>	<p>FAFT continue to work closely with the Participation and Children’s Rights Officer to ensure opportunities are developed to capture the experiences of children, young people and Guardians.</p>	<p>Continued development of consultation opportunities with Guardians, including exploring the development of an SGO Forum for Guardians to inform service development and co-design information.</p> <p>Continued attendance at Support Groups to enable relationship building between Guardians and the FAFT Team.</p> <p>Undertake a review of our engagement and consultation mechanisms with the birth parents of children living in SGO arrangements.</p>
<p>Communication with Children and Young people</p>	<p>The FAFT Team have worked with the Participation and Children’s Rights Officer to establish consultation events with children living in SGO arrangements. In these discussions young people identified a priority area of work focussed on developing information on “The Evolution of the SGO” to help children and young people</p>	<p>Children's wishes and feelings are gathered during the Assessment stage.</p> <p>FAFT run regular Activity Days where children and young people living in Kinship care have an opportunity to meet and engage with other children living in a similar arrangement.</p>	<p>The Participation and Children’s Rights Officer will continue to work with FAFT Team to maximise opportunities to engage and co-design with children and young people. Implementation of the Youth Voice in Action training in FAFT will maximise opportunities for children and young people in SGO</p>

	<p>understand SGO arrangements and what it means for them.</p>		<p>arrangements to inform service developments. This will include co-designing how children and young people would like to develop and received information, e.g., video format.</p> <p>Develop communication systems with children and young people to ensure they understand SGO and what it means for them. Young people to help us design the best way to share this information.</p> <p>FAFT to continue developing and supporting engagement opportunities with children and young people alongside the Participation and Children's Rights Officer.</p>
<p>Referral and Assessment Systems and Processes</p>	<p>The SGO Panel has been developed to ensure thorough support planning, joint interagency working, and to provide learning and practice opportunities around the support needs of SGO families.</p> <p>Engagement with 'front door' services about referral systems for SGO families from out of county as well as those already known to FAFT / Swansea.</p> <p>Development of clear working practices with IAA (Information, Advice and Assistance), SPOC (Single Point of Contact), the Academy and Early Help Teams. Ongoing system mapping of these processes is underway to ensure smooth transition between these team. This will form part of</p>	<p>Guardians and parents of children living in SGO arrangements can access the Family and Friends Team duty team for advice and support.</p> <p>EDT is available for Guardian in case of emergencies.</p> <p>On transfer, FAFT confirm in writing to Guardians the case transfer and ensure they have access to the duty service.</p> <p>Prior to transfer the CSW inform parents and involved professionals of the case transfer and contact details for FAFT.</p> <p>FAFT have a transfer process in place for families based in Swansea but where an SGO has been awarded within a different</p>	<p>Development of written confirmation on transfer to all who are receiving SGO support Services, including parents.</p> <p>FAFT to continue to agree develop processes for seamless access to services for SGO families, including continued joint planning with our intake team and early help services.</p> <p>Develop clear guidance and procedures for accepting new referrals, referrals regarding families open to FAFT, responding to out of county requests, information of WCCIS referrals and other associated SGO contacts.</p>

	<p>the SGO policy and practice guidance documentation.</p> <p>The Stability Panel has been established with a joint working protocol to support those families at risk of breakdown due to Safeguarding issues or family instability. The purpose of this panel is to provide oversight and support to families who are subject to the stability protocol in relation to special guardianship. The panel will review Family Stability Plans and the support being provided, with a focus on achieving stability and maintaining the SGO, with the child living with their family. The goals of this Panel is to avoid family breakdown, prioritise children’s best interests and well-being, promote collaboration amongst services, foster joint learning, enhance the understanding of SGO stability and inform service development.</p> <p>Continued completion of Unified Assessment of prospective Guardians and provision of ongoing support to locality teams completing private SGO Applications.</p> <p>Continued joint working in respect of families where there are both CINCS (Child in Need of Care and Support) and SGO support needs identified.</p>	<p>authority, these are accepted promptly and efficiently at the 3-year point.</p> <p>FAFT accept referrals from Out of County authorities where families are based in Swansea prior to the 3-year transfer timescale to ensure local services and support can be offered without delay.</p> <p>FAFT and IAA, SPOC and Academy have close communication about a SGO cases, to ensure access to services at the right level is offered without delay.</p> <p>Families with SGO who also have a CIN (Child in Need) or CP (Child Protection) plan have been continuously supported by FAFT under the SGO support plan. This support ensures step down to SGO support plan only at the earliest opportunity and provides a consistent and joined up approach to support being offered to families by FAFT and front-line teams.</p>	<p>Review of the transfer process to FAFT to ensure this it is smooth and consistent for all families. The system mapping will help us identify and address any gaps including those we are already aware of e.g. the gap between an SGO being awarded to case being transferred to FAFT. The goal is to achieve continuous support from FAFT when SGO is awarded for all families already known to FAFT.</p>
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<p>Preplacement Support to Special Guardians and Children</p>	<p>Preparation for SGO workshops have been developed by the Specialist Kinship Support Officer (As outlined above).</p>	<p>FAFT pre and post SGO support sessions.</p> <p>General information is available on the Council's website about SGO. Prospective Guardians are also sent an information pack when they are referred for SGO assessment.</p> <p>Family meeting are undertaken by FAFT during the Public Law Outline process (or earlier if requested). This ensures that families have information about the process and their options at an early stage so that they can make an informed decision.</p> <p>Financial support is provided towards legal costs up to the sum of £3000 for the families of children whose care plan is to apply for an SGO order.</p> <p>The Foster Wales Swansea Training Calendar is available to all Special Guardians.</p> <p>FAFT work closely with children's social workers and attend LAC (Looked After Children) reviews.</p> <p>Needs based financial support assessment for Guardians.</p>	<p>Engagement with current and prospective Guardian's to support the development / co-design of an information pack for those applying for SGO to ensure that it we develop relevant information to support them in both the decision making for and establishing of their SGO arrangement. We will work with Guardians to identify the best way to share this with them e.g. electronic, web-based etc.</p> <p>Development of 'Welcome Pack' for new Guardians.</p> <p>Welfare Rights checks to be standardised as part of the new financial assessment process as to maximise the income of our SGO families.</p> <p>Development of opportunities for existing Guardians to be involved in the facilitation of our preparation for SGO support groups.</p> <p>Development of information to ensure all Guardians are aware of the support available to them and their rights of appeal, including our complaints process. This includes the development a clear and transparent support offer, outlining both the emotional and wellbeing support provided along with information on the financial assessment and support system.</p>
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<p>Support with Contact Arrangements and Managing Family Relationships</p>	<p>Development of our consultation / information process for case transfers to discuss support for contact arrangements and managing family relationships as agreed within the SGO Support Plan</p>	<p>Contact arrangements are discussed and included in the SGO support plan. This is overseen by SGO panel.</p> <p>FAFT provide mediation and communication between family members in relation to contact.</p> <p>FAFT arrange indirect, direct and supervised contact, where necessary.</p> <p>Duty support available for contact issues. This is available to birth parents also where the child or young person is open to FAFT.</p> <p>FAFT Family Stability meeting process considers managing contact.</p> <p>Specific training provided by CFS on managing contact. This can be accessed by Guardians.</p>	<p>Development of a contact template, contact agreement and contact guidance for Guardians and birth parents.</p> <p>Development of a workshop and guidance for Guardians on how to support a child with contact.</p> <p>FAFT to assist with assessment of family members to enable safe contact to occur for the child.</p> <p>All Guardians to receive an annual letter inviting them to contact FAFT if their support needs have changed.</p> <p>FAFT to ensure children, young people, Guardians and Parents have copies of support plans relevant to them.</p>
<p>Financial Advice and Support</p>	<p>Review of SGO allowances in consultation with Guardians, the Social Care and Finance Team and the Welfare Rights Team. This resulted in an average raise in SGO basic allowances of 14% this year.</p> <p>Positive feedback received from Guardians around the impact of the increased SGO basic allowance.</p> <p>Continued learning and development of the SGO Panel with colleagues from Welfare Rights and Finance to ensure that our support offer includes incomes maximisation of our SGO families from all available sources e.g. DWP, Government Grants etc.</p>	<p>SGO basic allowances are paid to all Special Guardian and are reviewed annually.</p> <p>Maintenance of Income for former foster carers is maintained at the Fostering Allowance rate for 2 years following the SGO being granted.</p> <p>A standardised assessment of need is undertaken in respect of Additional Allowances to ensure consistent payments are made to Guardians.</p> <p>Kinship Support Officers link with the Welfare Rights Team to undertake 'benefit checks' to maximise families' income.</p>	<p>Continued development of the financial assessment process for SGO allowances alongside the Social Care and Finance Team.</p> <p>Welfare Rights checks to be implemented at assessment stage for every family.</p> <p>Development of clear and accessible financial arrangements which will be available to Guardians.</p> <p>Clear information for staff and Guardians will be produced as part of the SGO Policy pack.</p>

<p>Preventive / Early Intervention Support for Families and Children's Emotional and Psychological Well-being</p>		<p>Guardians can access support groups and family activity days for children, facilitated by FAFT.</p> <p>FAFT work closely with Early Help services to provide support to Guardians, children and young people.</p> <p>Life story books are available for all children living in an SGO arrangement.</p> <p>Dedicated Kinship Support officers offer emotional support, advice and guidance to families and are able to liaise with other services within Child and Family Services as well as those in Health, Education and Community Support Services.</p> <p>Kinship Support officers can provide emotional support to Guardians' own children.</p>	<p>Ongoing development and training around key intervention areas including contact support and undertaking life story work with children, to enhance our current offer.</p> <p>Development of a 'minimum offer' of 6 months support after an SGO is established from a Kinship Support Worker for those families who would like this level of support.</p> <p>FAFT team to further enhance coaching with Guardians on relationship-based play interventions, secure base interventions, parenting interventions informed by child's attachment needs, and Guardians wellbeing plans. This would include facilitating workshop based activities and peer support opportunities.</p>
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<p>Specialist Support for Families and Children’s Emotional and Psychological Well-being</p>	<p>Increased access with our Internal Therapy Service (ITS) to now be able to access therapeutic support from this service without the child needing to be a ‘Child in Need’.</p>	<p>FAFT collaborate with ITS to ensure therapeutic and emotional support is available for SGO families. ITS offers a range of interventions for SGO families such as: DDP and Therapeutic Life Journey Work.</p> <p>Additional external therapeutic services can be funded following ITS consultation.</p> <p>Children and young people and Guardians have access to emotional support from FAFT, Early Help and Family Support Services in Swansea.</p>	<p>Development of a range of therapeutic services to address the emotional and behavioural and wellbeing needs of children and young people. These services may include counselling, play therapy, art therapy, sport therapy and peer support mentoring. We will work with ITS and explore the training and development need of both FAFT and Guardians.</p> <p>ITS offer to Special Guardianship families to be confirmed this year.</p> <p>Resource materials to be produced for Guardians that highlight the therapeutic and emotional support available for children and young people in their care.</p> <p>ITS Therapeutic offer for SGO families to be confirmed this year and development plan outlined to respond to identified needs.</p> <p>Development of a training plan for FAFT in this area to equip the team with the knowledge, skills, tools, and resources necessary to support children’s emotional wellbeing.</p> <p>Implement the All-Wales SGO Support Plan and Coram BAAF Form F to ensure robust assessment and planning to identify the specialist support required.</p>
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<p>Services to Support the Transition of Young People to Independence</p>	<p>Developed facility (via the SGO panel) for increased or extended support to be considered for category 5 and 6 young people subject to SGO under the terms of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014.</p>	<p>Assessments of need are available for Young People who qualify under the leaving care act via leaving care services. This is arranged via FAFT Support Officers</p>	<p>Develop information on transition as part of the wider information development work being undertaken with children, young people and Guardians.</p> <p>Leaving care planning to be included in all support plans from initial stages.</p> <p>Development of a 'Working Agreement' with our leaving care services to provide advice and support to all SGO families.</p> <p>Develop the process to support young people living in SGO arrangements to access higher education e.g., supporting letters, bursaries.</p> <p>Development of a Skills for Independence Resource for young people living in SGO arrangements.</p> <p>Scoping of peer support opportunities for young people.</p>
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<p>Support to Access Services from Other Parts of the Local Authority</p>	<p>Development of SGO panel to review proposed support planning.</p> <p>SGO Stability panel has been set up this year beginning July 2023.</p>	<p>SGO Panels helps ensure SGO support plans adequately address the needs of children, young people, and Guardians to promotes the wellbeing of the family. The panel makes recommendations for adjustments to support plans and ensures collaboration between frontline teams, finance, welfare rights, and SQU to ensure the right support for families.</p> <p>SGO Stability Panel provides oversight and support to families who are subject to the stability protocol in relation to SGO and are at risk of breakdown. The panel consists of representatives from FAFT, Intake teams, Early Help, Leaving Care and Family Support.</p>	<p>Review of SGO Support Panel to confirm its purpose, understand staff perspective on Panel and ensure Panel supports us to achieve what matters to children, young people and families.</p> <p>SGO Stability Panel to be trialled and reviewed.</p>
<p>Support to Access Services from Other Agencies</p>		<p>FAFT Support Officers are available to support Special Guardians to communicate with other agencies including Education and Housing and involve these agencies in support planning as necessary.</p> <p>Family Stability meetings include other agencies such as Education and Health when needed.</p>	<p>Review of joint working opportunities with other agencies to develop and maximise the support offer for SGO families.</p>
<p>Commissioning Systems and Processes</p>	<p>Commissioning for external therapeutic services is now subject to consultation with ITS to ensure the appropriate and best service is identified.</p>	<p>ITS support the commissioning of external therapeutic services.</p>	

<p>Workforce Development</p>	<p>Promotion of FAFT SGO support services and development of learning opportunities via Locality Team Meetings.</p> <p>SGO workshop development.</p> <p>Workstream based approach to Service Development has offered an opportunity to share learning and information with representatives from across Child and Family Services and co-ordinate the development of our SGO offer.</p> <p>Identification of FAFT training opportunities as part of the ongoing review of Services. Many of these are outlined in specific areas of this action plan and have specific next steps identified against those areas.</p>	<p>FAFT are Specialist Kinship Care Team who offer support to Guardians from initial family meetings during PLO and early identification of potential Guardians through to annual reviews and transition in established arrangements.</p> <p>Comprehensive training is available to staff both in house and externally commissioned when needed.</p>	<p>Liaise with staff across Child and Family Services to support the development of information and guidance for social workers involved in supporting potential and existing Guardians e.g. process maps including roles, responsibilities and best practice at key stages such as suitability assessment, financial assessment, PLO and court.</p> <p>Develop a seamless transition in SGO support through assessment and post-order support</p> <p>Ongoing review and update of FAFT specific workforce development plan.</p> <p>Additional Deputy manager appointed to support and develop the SGO workforce.</p>
<p>Monitoring and Evaluation</p>	<p>Improved performance reporting systems and information capture in relation to our SGO population and their needs.</p>	<p>Monthly performance data is gathered by FAFT and provided to the Learning and Innovation Team.</p> <p>Ongoing engagement and consultation with SGO families</p>	<p>Continued development of performance information to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual evaluation of support offered to Guardians. • Progress data and understanding of outcomes for Guardians and young people into adulthood

Budget and Resources	<p>Social Services Finance Team have been involved in reviewing SGO allowances this year. The SGO budget was increased to meet this additional need identified in the Basic Allowance review.</p>	<p>SGO support needs are prioritised in terms of budget spending.</p> <p>Allowances are reviewed annually.</p> <p>Staff capacity in FAFT is reviewed regularly to ensure sufficient capacity to meet demand.</p> <p>A standardised approach to assessing financial needs of SGO families is in place to ensure budgets are directed to the families that need the support.</p>	<p>FAFT, Social Services Finance Team and Social Care Finance Team will review SGO allowances and budget annually.</p>
Birth Parent Support	<p>Furthered links with Swansea's Reflect Service to establish opportunities for joint working with birth parents.</p> <p>Developed links with the Parent Advocacy Project and supported facilitation of the Accredited training of 2 staff members as part of the project development.</p>	<p>Birth parents can be referred to Swansea Reflect service for emotional support and guidance in respect of life choices and support in addressing any difficulties or challenges they may face.</p> <p>Collaborative working between FAFT and Reflect to offer support to SGO birth parents as required.</p> <p>SGO support plans allow identification of plan to support birth parents as required.</p> <p>FAFT Support Officers provide emotional support and guidance to birth parents e.g., contact arrangements, promote their child's best interests.</p> <p>FAFT provide support with communication and mediation between family members.</p> <p>Contact reviews with parents are held as necessary.</p>	<p>Explore opportunities to engage and consult with birth parents to inform the development of specific birth parents related guidance e.g., duty lines, contact, support services.</p> <p>Enhance and develop our support offer for birth parents e.g., provision of information and communication, support building emotional resilience, improving confidence and self-esteem, support to attend contact reviews and understanding their child's needs.</p> <p>FAFT to explore the 'Looking Forward' project model which aims to encourage birth parents to understand the experience of permanent separation due to SGO and to enhance access the help they need to plan for their futures.</p>

<p>A Plan for the Future Development of Services</p>	<p>SGO Service planning and development has been a priority in Swansea for several years and the service has developed significantly as outlined in the identified areas in this document.</p>	<p>This SGO Development Plan outlines our commitments and priorities for the forthcoming year.</p>	<p>Continue to develop and expand the FAFT team, including the appointment of an additional Deputy Manager, initially funded for 2 years (Grant Funding).</p> <p>Ongoing development work to be undertaken alongside the Participation and Children’s Rights Officer, Policy and Strategy Development Officer and Systems Thinking Team to move forward the actions outlined in this Plan.</p> <p>Continue to engage and consult with children, young people and Guardians around what matters to them to inform service development.</p> <p>Continue to engage Staff from across Child and Family Services and other agencies in service development activities.</p>
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