

Special Guardianship Financial Support



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1. Purpose and Legal Basis

Coventry City Council (CCC) provides financial support to Special Guardians (SGs) under the Special Guardianship Regulations 2005 and in accordance with the Special Guardianship Statutory Guidance 2017. Financial support is payable only where the Council considers it necessary to enable the Special Guardian(s)/prospective Special Guardian(s) to care for the child (Regulation 6(1) & (2)). The amount of support is determined by considering other available resources, the Special Guardian's financial situation, and the child's needs (Regulation 13(2) & (3)).

2. Principles of Support

Financial support is intended to remove financial barriers to suitable Special Guardianship arrangements. Financial support may be provided to facilitate arrangements for a person to become a Special Guardian or to support the continuation of the arrangement. Payments may be made where necessary to ensure the Special Guardian can look after the child, where the child needs special care (because of long-term illness, disability, emotional or behavioural difficulties or the consequences of past abuse or neglect) and for legal costs, or for necessary expenditure to accommodate and maintain the child.

CCC is committed to evidencing specific decision making and the provision of reasons for financial decisions. Financial support is assessed on its own facts and tailored to individual circumstances, resources, needs and the child's individual needs.

3. Assessment Process

All applications for Special Guardianship financial allowance are subject to a means test, except for the following circumstances:

- i. The first two years following a Special Guardianship Order for former Kinship/foster carers.
- ii. Where bespoke financial support packages have been agreed through the exceptional allowances panel.

In determining the amount of financial support, CCC must consider:

- Any other grant, benefit, allowance or resource available to the Special Guardian (Reg 13(2)).
- The Special Guardian's financial resources, including tax credits or benefits (Reg 13(3)(a)).
- The Special Guardian's reasonable outgoings and commitments (excluding child-related costs)(Reg 13(3)(b)).
- The financial needs and resources of the child (Reg 13(3)(c)).

CCC's model is based on its full fostering allowance, which exceeds the national minimum.

Financial support cannot duplicate other payments and must be based on individual need. The fostering allowance that would have been payable had the child been fostered is used as the maximum benchmark for calculating support. CCC will advise Special Guardians to access any benefits to which they are entitled; this will usually include child benefit and tax credits.

CCC will provide special guardians and applicants with clear reasons of how SGA is calculated.

Further details on the assessment process and request for review of SGA calculations can be found at **Applications for Special Guardianship Orders**



4. Treatment of Child Benefit

CCC deducts child benefit from the final SGA assessment, including where Special Guardians are in receipt of benefits. This deduction is justified because Special Guardians are separately entitled to child benefit and CCC's fostering allowance exceeds the national minimum. This means that even after deducting child benefit, the SGA remains higher than the national minimum amount a Special Guardian would receive. However, child benefit will not be deducted as a blanket policy, as there will be exemptions and each case will be considered individually with written reasons provided.

5. Exceptional Allowances Panel

The Exceptional Allowances Panel considers bespoke financial support packages for Special Guardians where standard SGA arrangements may not meet the needs of the child or Special Guardian's circumstances. The panel may approve support for high-cost needs, transition arrangements, financial hardship, one-off payments, and legal costs. Referrals must include a clear rationale and evidence. Decisions are recorded with reasons and ongoing payments reviewed annually.

Special Guardians have the right of appeal to decisions made by the Exceptional Allowance's Panel, via an Appeal Panel if requested within 10 working days of their written receipt of the outcome from the Exceptional Allowance Panel.

6. Financial Assessment Process

Applicants complete financial assessment forms with supporting evidence. The allowance is calculated using income, standard outgoings, and benefits, measured against the fostering allowance. If disposable income falls below the fostering rate, the difference forms the basis of the SGA. If calculated at zero, the applicant is informed and documents returned. Proposed allowances are set out in the SGO support plan and reassessed annually.

7. Post-Order Support for Former Foster Carers

CCC supports transitions from fostering to Special Guardianship arrangements. Where a foster carer agrees to provide permanent care, and the child has been looked after by CCC for at least one month, CCC will provide an allowance equivalent to existing fees and allowances (minus child benefit and universal credit if applicable) for two years post-order. Thereafter, support is means-tested. Legal fee support up to £500 is available where CCC leads the application to discharge the care order. Private applicants are assessed under standard criteria.

8. Review and Changes in Circumstances

Financial support is reviewed annually through a 'desk top' review or sooner if there is a significant change in the Special Guardian's or child's circumstances, where a bespoke package of support has been agreed. SGO carers can request a review/reassessment of their financial support, if their circumstances change, which will be presented to the Exceptional Allowances panel for consideration.

If the Special Guardian moves out of Coventry, CCC remains responsible for financial support unless agreed otherwise. Other support services will be the responsibility of the new authority unless the child was previously looked after prior to the Special Guardianship Order being made in which case support services will remain the responsibility of CCC for at least three years post order.

Support may continue until the child ceases to have a home with the Special Guardians, end of education, training and commences employment or where the child qualifies for benefits in their own right (other than child benefit) as part of a transition plan.



Support normally ceases when the child turns 18, unless;

- a) The child is in full-time education or training.
- b) The child has special needs or disabilities.

Any request for continued support post18 will be considered by the Exceptional Allowance panel and should be made no less than three months prior to the child's

18th birthday. The financial element of this support, will generally be in line with the current Staying Put Allowance, taking into account that the child post-18, may be able to apply for alternative state benefits, have access to income or support from adult services. The Exceptional Allowance panel will consider each individual's case, to determine ongoing support specific to that child's circumstances and needs, as they transition into adulthood.

Contact Information

To request a financial assessment or learn more about post-order support, contact PSS Fostering at

PSSFostering@coventry.gov.uk

or call **024 7697 6759**

For further details visit
coventry.gov.uk/fostering

