

Kinship Care



What is Kinship Care

Fostering – Kinship fostering is a type of care for children who cannot live with their birth parents and move to live with relatives or friends who the child has an existing relationship with. These carers are assessed and approved under the fostering regulations the same as general foster carers.

CAO – is a legal arrangement set out by the court that details the arrangements for the child including where they live and how they will spend time with each parent. This is a legally binding arrangement.

SGO – is a formal court order made by the family court which places a child in the care of another person, usually someone with a close relationship to the child.

Kinship Strategy

In December 2023, the Government published the first ever national strategy for kinship carers, Kinship Care Matters- National Kinship Strategy. The strategy establishes “the foundations for a future, transformed kinship care system in England.”

- The strategy includes the following commitments, amongst others:
 - 🕒 Launching a kinship financial allowance, paid at the same rate as the fostering allowance, beginning in up to 8 local authorities.
 - 🕒 Expanding the Virtual School Head’s role
 - 🕒 Renaming the Adoption Support Fund to the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund
 - 🕒 New government guidance for employers on how kinship carers can be supported at work.
 - 🕒 Establishing a training, information and advice offer for all kinship carers.
 - 🕒 Creating a new Kinship Care Ambassador role
 - 🕒 Publishing an updated version of the 2011 Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities
 - 🕒 Agreeing work with the Law Commission to review legal orders and statuses for kinship carers.

What kinship care means for a child

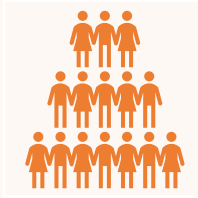
Some stability without legally separating them from their birth parents

the chance to build a firm foundation for a lifelong permanent relationship

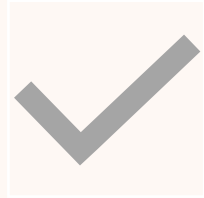
the opportunity to remain within their extended family network

Because of their existing relationship or connection with the child, kinship carers often feel more motivated to manage tricky situations or go through approval or legal procedures in order to provide a consistent, secure and loving home for the child.

Kinship fostering



Child remains a child in Care



Carers are assessed and approved as foster carers the same as general foster carers



Foster carers do not have parental responsibility



Child and carers still subject to all statutory reviews, visits and checks.

Kinship Foster Carers support



Ongoing support including 4 weekly supervision with a Supervising Social Worker.



CAMHS consultation



Training & Support groups



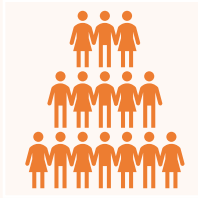
Annual reviews

Approval as a Kinship Foster carer

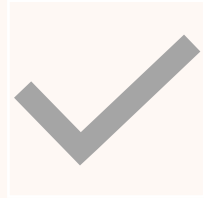
Pre assessment – the Kinship Team will undertake a full fostering assessment and present it to the fostering panel for consideration prior to the child living with the carers.

Reg 24 approval – this allows a connected person to be approved as a temporary foster carer for 16 weeks (max 24 weeks) pending a full assessment and presentation to the fostering panel. During this time a child(ren) will be living with the carers. This arrangement should only be used in an emergency when an initial viability confirms it is the right plan for the child in the interim.

SGO



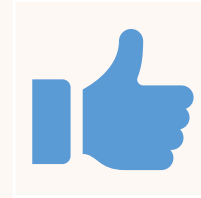
Child leaves care and remains with the SGO until 18 and beyond.



Carers are robustly assessed inline with fostering assessment



SGO carers gain parental responsibility



Child is able to live a family life with no need for social care involvement.

Special Guardianship Post Order Support

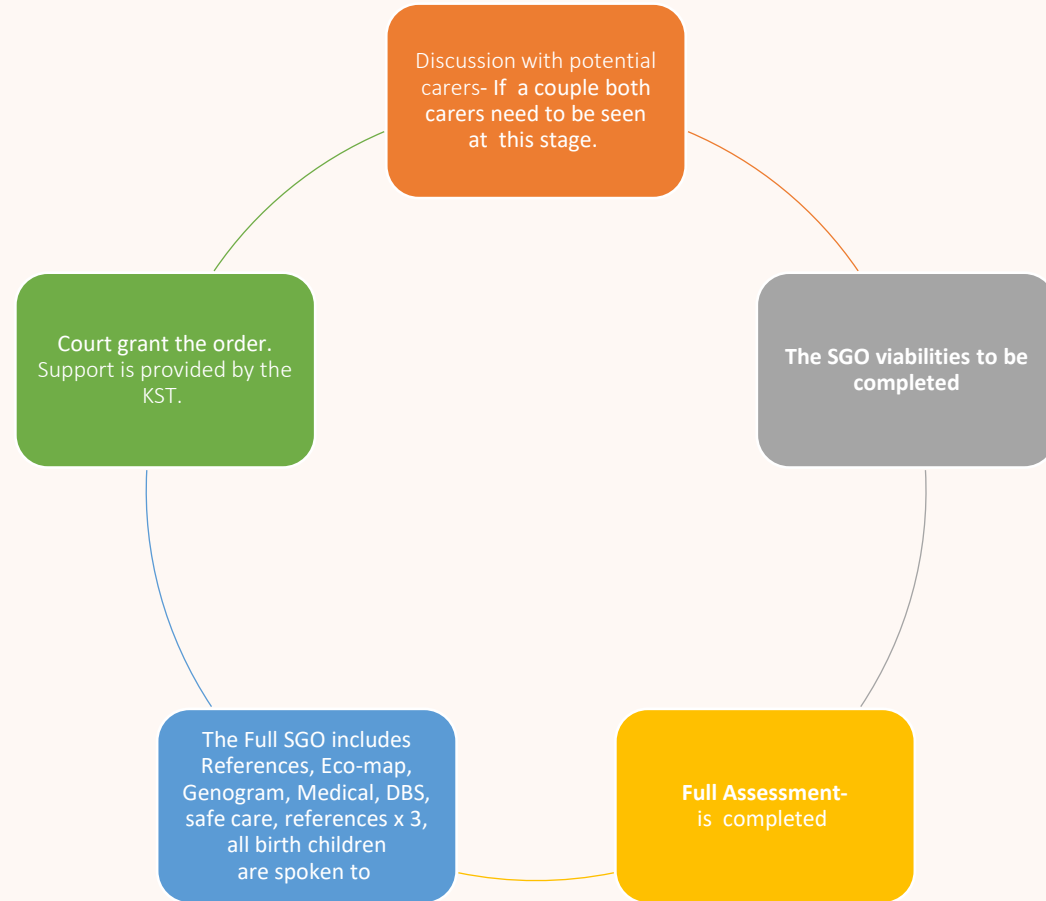
Open door advice, guidance and support from a family support worker

Adoption Support funded therapeutic support.

CAMHS consultation

Training & Support groups

Special Guardianship Order Process



Adoption and Special Guardian Support Fund

The ASF is available for children and young people up to and including the age of 21, or 25 with an education, health and care plan, who:

Were in care immediately before a SGO was made

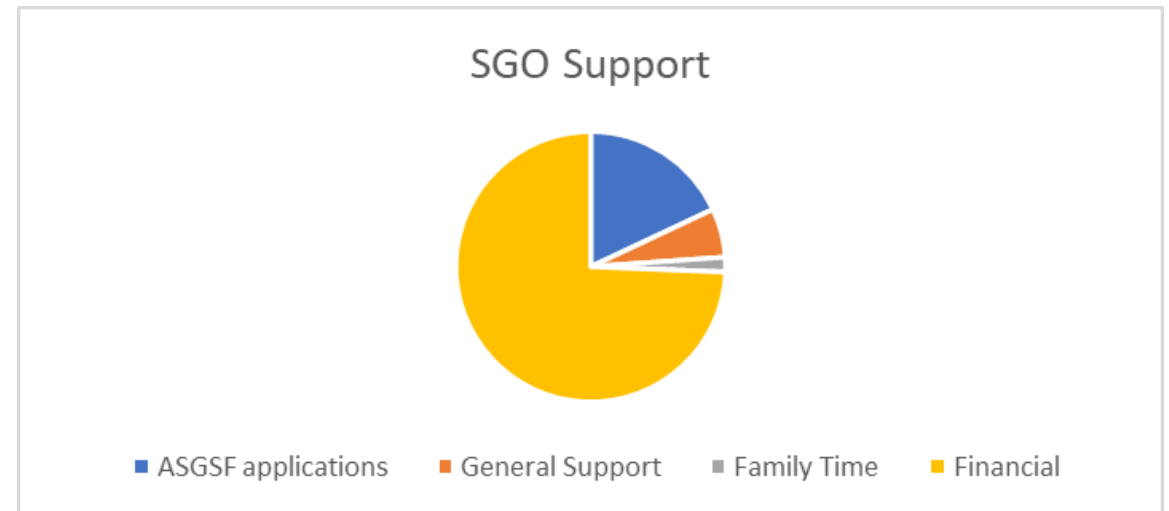
Left care under a special guardianship order which subsequently was changed to an adoption order, or vice versa

Are under a residency order or child arrangement order (CAO) and were previously looked after

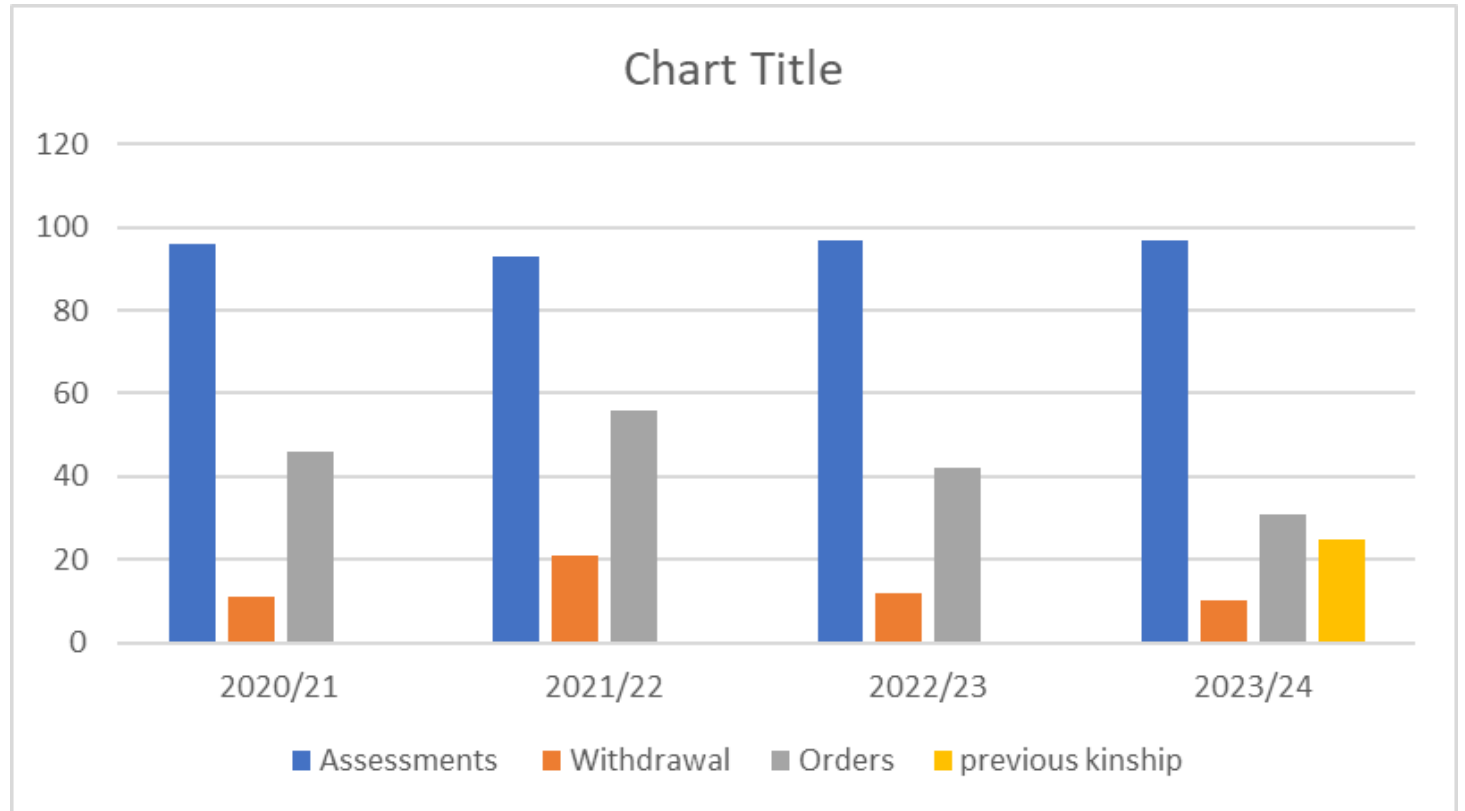
Were previously looked after but where the adoption, special guardianship, residency or CAO placement has broken down, irrespective of any reconciliation plans

SGO Families

- There are currently 324 SG families known to Gloucestershire County Council who have access to our support services. The amount of support needed varies from one family to another and the team work with families as and when needed, with regular reviews to prevent long term unnecessary intervention.
- You can see from the chart that the majority of the support provided is in the form of financial support, followed by applications to the ASGSF.
- SG's who receive financial support do so based on pre agreed support plans, assessments of need and financial assessment. All allowances are paid in line with the fostering allowances and subject to annual increases. Some allowances are time limited, for example until a child is school age or for a period of two years when the carer was previously a foster carer, and others are ongoing based on annual financial reviews.



Number of SGO's over the years



- The chart above shows the numbers of SGO assessments and orders granted over the last 4 years. Year on year there has been limited change to the number of assessments completed which is significantly higher than the number of SGO's granted. There are a number of reasons for this including applicants withdrawing, which is recorded below in orange, negative assessments, change in care plan and SGO being granted to another applicant.

Child Arrangement Order

Provides parental responsibility (PR) to the carer whilst maintaining parents PR

Child is no longer looked after, no need for social worker involvement

No review process

As child is no longer looked after less stigma is attached to arrangement.

Support through a Child Arrangement Order

The birth parents ultimately have a duty to provide support including financial.

Childrens services can provide support under section 17 of the Children Act. This will need to be assessed and based on specific situations.

What are we working on

- We are planning information sessions for kinship foster carers to share information about SGO's, the sessions branded, 'your commitment to them, our commitment to you' are due to start in the Summer focusing on all carers both approved and being assessed under a regulation 24 agreement.
- Kinship carers conference, this is being planned to take place in September 2024 and will include guest speakers and workshops, the focus is about support and permanence.
- Kinship carers engagement event, these will be held quarterly to share information and provide greater opportunity to share information and meet with senior managers.
- Development of a WhatsApp community broadcast group, which has been developed in another local authority area and has been hugely beneficial in relation to support and sharing information.
- Quarterly reviews of kinship foster carers, permanence planning and SGO to take place, agreeing actions needed and considering gaps in support and barriers to achieving permanence through SGO.
- Implementation of the LL pathway for SGO.
- Development of the Kinship strategy.

Questions

