

Introduction to Special Guardianship Orders for Carers

Introductions and training objectives

The purpose of this training is to explore :

- 1) What is a SGO (Special Guardianship Order)?
- 2) Why are you considering becoming a Special Guardian?
- 3) What is involved in becoming a Special Guardian?
 - How does the Local authority determine if a child should be made subject of SGO
 - How does the local authority assess you or other parties as suitable to be a guardian
 - How does the local authority decide what financial support you should receive
- 4) What happens after the SGO is granted?
 - What is the local authorities involvement
 - Parental responsibility
 - What support can you expect
 - Behavioural issues
 - Contact issues

What is a Special Guardianship Order (SGO)

- SGOs came into force under the Adoption and Children Act 2002.
- SGOs are intended to meet the needs of children:
 - who cannot live with their parents,
 - for whom adoption is not appropriate ,
 - who would benefit from a legal secure placement.
- A SGO is a court order appointing one or more individuals to be a child's special guardian.
- A guardian must be over 18 years.
- A foster carer can become a guardian.

Why are you considering becoming a Guardian?



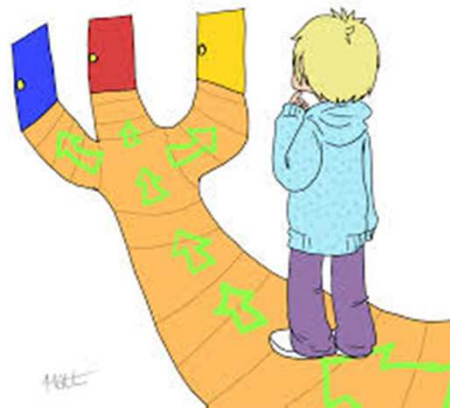
What is the process of becoming a Special Guardian (SGO)?

Assessing the needs of the Child

Adoption ?

Fostering ?

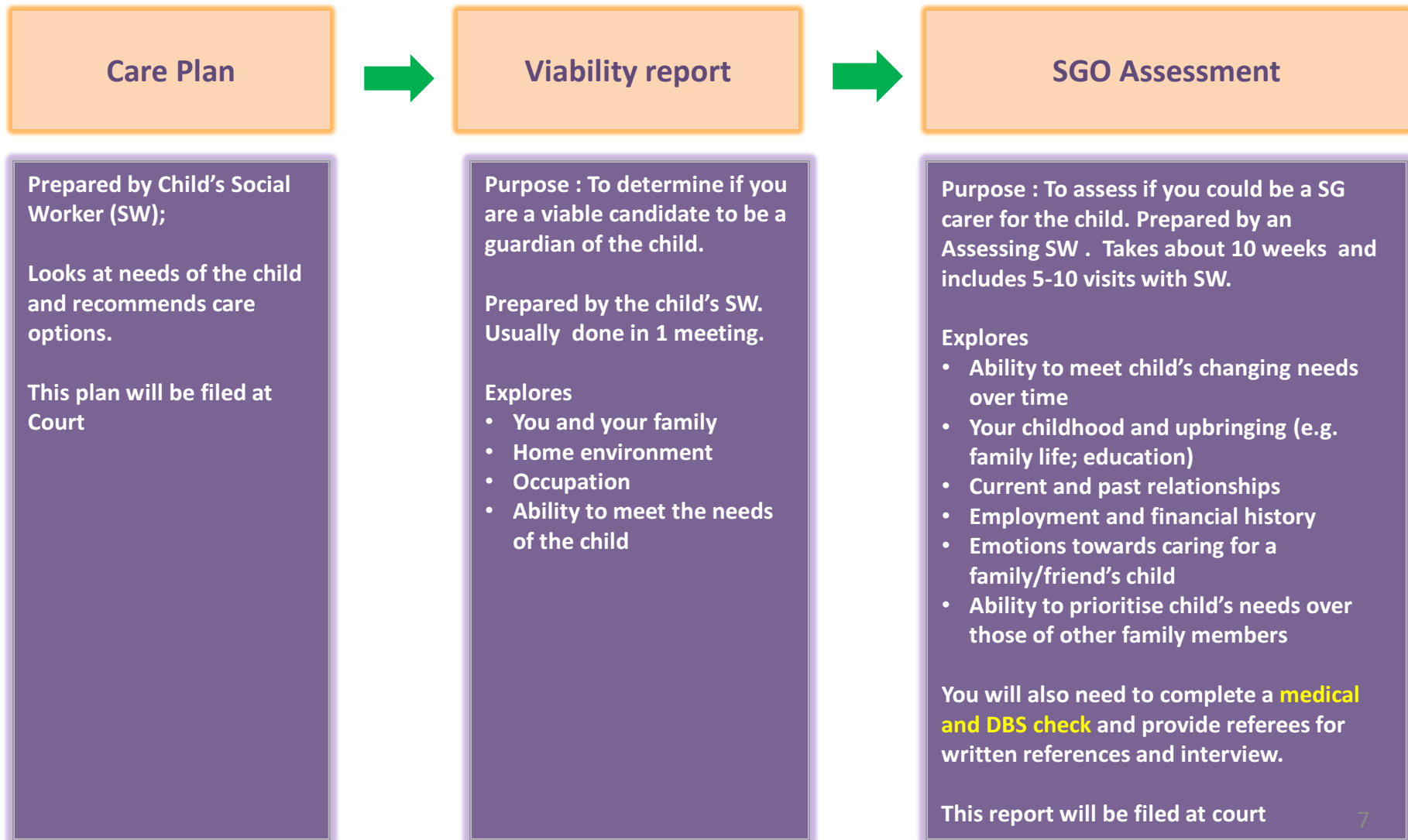
Child
arrangement
order ?



Connected
carers ?

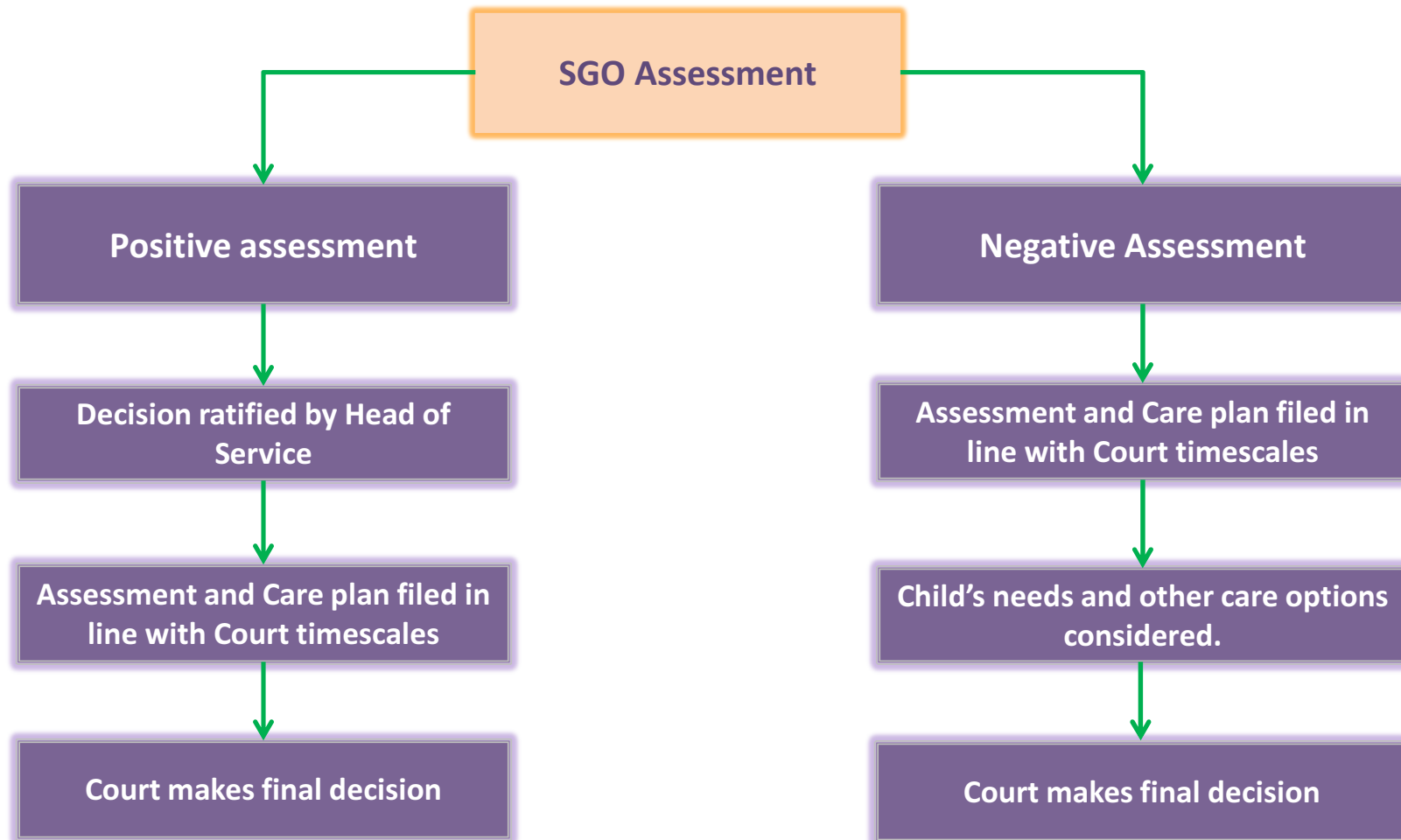
SGO ?

Assessment Process - Key Documents



Outcome of Assessment

- The outcome of the Assessment is either a positive or negative recommendation.
- All Assessments are filed at court, regardless of the outcome.
- The final decision is made by the court.

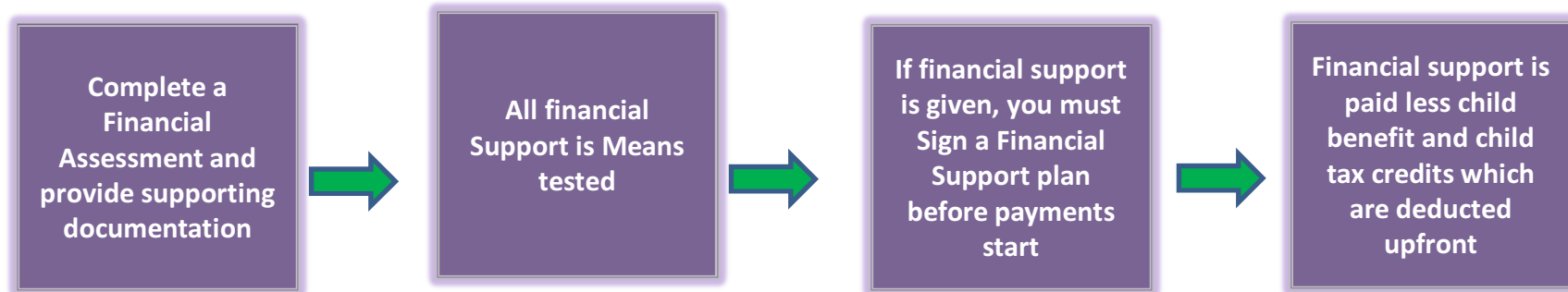


SGO Support Plan

- Your SGO Support Plan is very important. The Assessing Social Worker will complete this alongside your assessment.
- The Support plan will also be filed at court.
- The SGO Support plan is where you will have the opportunity to discuss with the Social Worker what you feel you and your child will need.
- You will need to read, agree and sign this before the order is made.



Financial Support Assessment

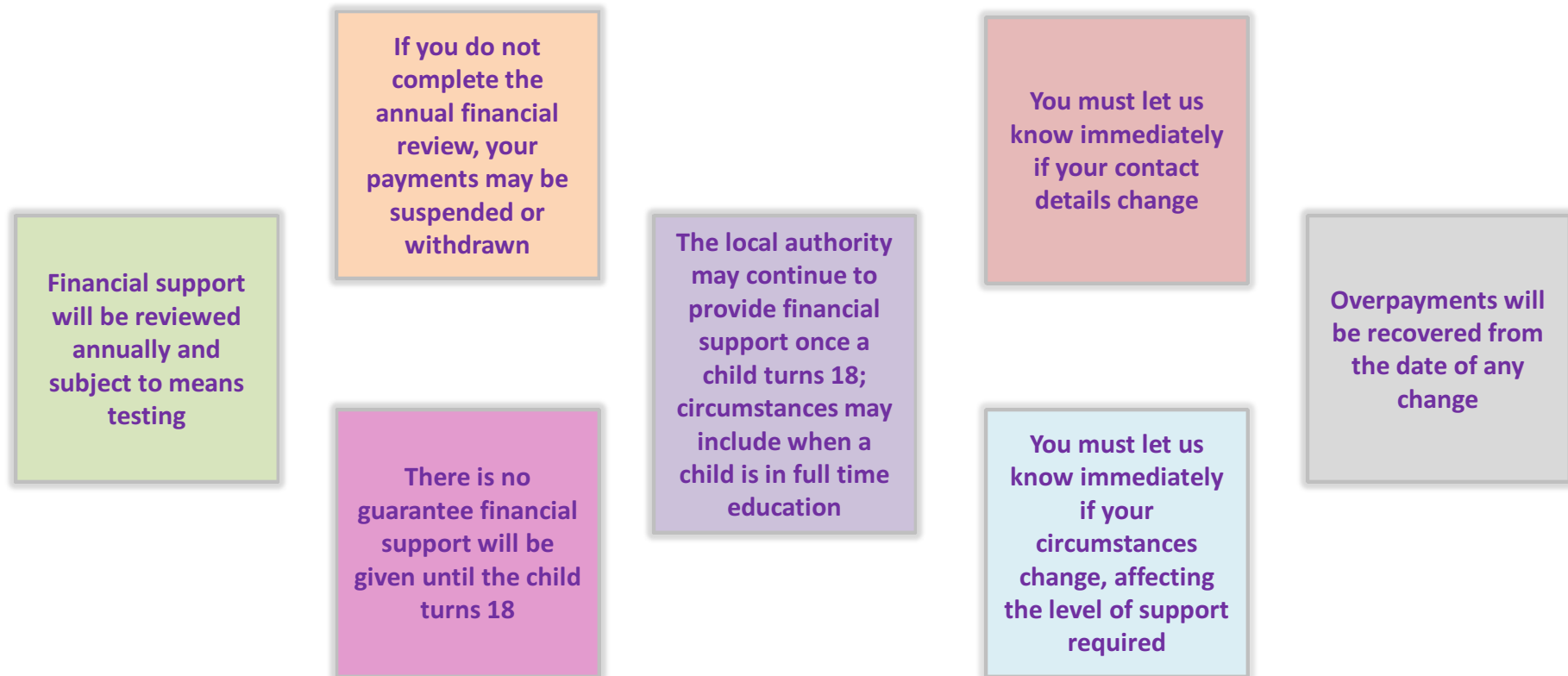


- As part of the process you will be asked to complete a Financial Assessment which aims to provide a snap shot of your financial position.
- It is important that you return the assessment form (with supporting documentation) otherwise we will be unable to assess you for financial support.
- If you need assistance completing the form we can help you .



Terms of Financial Support (2 of 2)

Carers must be mindful that financial support can change and is subject to the following :



Legal Support

- The local authority will pay for you to have a meeting with a solicitor, who is independent from the local authority, and can answer your questions.
- We really urge you to use the meeting to get clarity over the SGO process and what it means for you.
- If the SGO is contested by birth parents at any point after the order has been granted, the SG carer can apply for, and be assessed, for further legal support.



What happens after the SGO is granted ?

What is the Local Authorities involvement?

After the SGO is granted :

- The child will no longer have a Social Worker meaning the Local Authority will not be involved with the child (if no other order is granted)
- The child will no longer be a 'Looked After Child'
- The Local Authority will provide support in terms of information and advice (if needed).
- **You will have parental responsibility** for the child until they reach adulthood.



Parental Responsibility & Exceptions

- An SGO gives you parental responsibility for the child and the right to make decisions about how the child is raised (e.g. education, medical treatment etc)
- Unlike adoption, the SGO does not remove parental responsibility from the birth parents BUT there are very few decisions they can make whilst the SGO exists.
- However there are some things you cannot change without the consent of the birth parents :
 - a child's surname
 - take the child abroad for more than 3 months
 - Place the child for adoption



Post SGO Support

- The North London Consortium is made up of 6 boroughs : Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Islington. Therefore, as a Barnet SG Carer you will be able to access the following in any of these boroughs :
 - SGO Support groups,
 - Training sessions (e.g. on welfare benefits and contact issues)
 - Ad hoc activities (e.g. xmas party, fun days)
- Barnet will also provide the following support :
 - An annual review of your Finances
 - Support and advice from the SGO Post Permanence Team (as required)
 - Currently Barnet has a contract with PAC-UK to provide therapeutic services (this may change in the future).



Educational support

If your child has been 'looked after' prior to the SGO being granted, you will be entitled to :

- Pupil Premium Plus (up to £1900 per child to be used by the school to meet the child's needs within the educational system).
- Priority for school admission.
- 15 hours free nursery / child care for children who are 2 years old.



Children's Behaviours

- Many of our children have experienced trauma in one form or another, hence the reason why they cannot live with their birth parents. Therefore, a key role of a SG Carer's is to provide a stable and consistent environment for the child.
- For some children, moving to a new home, experiencing contact and having a new 'parent' maybe distressing and confusing, and this may cause temporary changes to their behaviour.
- For others, earlier trauma experiences may manifest at a later stage as difficult behaviour.
- The SGO Post Permanence team are here to provide support and advice in such cases.



Contact

- When a child is living with you under a SGO they should be able to stay in touch with their birth parents and siblings. This is called [contact](#).
- You should think about how to make the child feel safe and secure when they are having contact with parents, siblings or other family members.
- It maybe helpful to draw up a signed agreement with the family to manage contact and boundaries. The Post Permanence team can help with this.
- The agreement should cover:
 - Type of contact : face-to-face, telephone, greeting cards, email, Facebook, other
 - Where : at home, in the community
 - Frequency and duration
- The SG carer has the authority to change contact arrangements if they have evidence it is not in the best interest of the child.



Issues around contact

How should you and the birth parent behave at contact

What should you do if contact is affecting the child or you do not feel it is safe

What happens if one party is under the influence of drugs/alcohol

How are changes communicated or disagreements resolved



What should you do if one party turns up unexpectedly

What happens if the birth parents undermine your care

Can contact be supervised, if so how

What should you do if one party fails to arrive at the agreed time

Who can support contact post order?

- The SGO Post Permanency Team can provide you with support on issues you may experience with contact.
- It is also possible to have limited supervised contact via **Barnet's Family Resource Centre in Southgate**. All referrals must come via the SGO Post Permanency Team and are limited to a maximum of 6 sessions.
- The **National Association of Child Contact Centres** is also able to provide supervised contact. In North London, they have 2 centres based in Palmers Green and Muswell Hill.
- Their contact details are as follows:
- <https://www.naccc.org.uk/contact-us>
- contact@naccc.org.uk
- 0845 4500 280

Voluntary Agencies who can help

- Grandparents Plus

- Website : www.grandparentsplus.org.uk
- Phone : 0300 123 7015
- Email : Advice.gpc@grandparentsplus.org.uk



- Family Rights Group

- Phone : free phone 0808 801 0366
- Website : www.frg.org.uk



FAQs

- Will I get support with contact?
- Can the children return to the care of their parents?
- What if my circumstances change?
- Can I change a child's name?
- Can I move abroad?
- Can I stop contact?
- What happens if I die?

