

Community Care Live SGO Panel Discussion

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Our Perspective

- Independent fostering providers
- Countrywide
- Day-to-day practice
- Concerns generated by feedback – carers and staff

Context: Purpose

- Adoption and Children Act 2002, implemented end of 2005
- Private legal order
- Full parental responsibility
- SGOs and permanency: child part of the family (birth or foster)
- Local authority duty to continue to support (discretionary and unspecified)

Context: Research

- Young children
- ‘in or on the edge of the care system’
- Local authority variation
- 50% Special Guardians felt properly prepared
- 20% ‘strongly pressured by the local authority’
- Stability ‘encouraging’

“The findings highlight the importance of children having a settled relationship and close bond with their carer prior to the SGO being made.”

- *Wade, Jim; Sinclair, Ian; Stuttard, Lucy; Simmonds, John: Investigating Special Guardianship: experiences, challenges and outcomes. Department for Education 2014*

SGOs: Problems in Practice

1. Poor or Non-Existent Child Centred Assessments
2. Timing
3. Pressure on Foster Carers
4. Lack of Support

Drivers for SGOs: Permanency on the Cheap?

- Care Orders rising
- Adoption Orders falling
- Problems with 26 week timetable
- Local authority and Health resources shrinking
- SGOs rising

The Future

- A distinctive permanency option
- Placement choice based on need
- A nationally agreed assessment and matching format for permanency
- Implement existing legislation and guidance fully
- Specified support