

**KINSHIP FOSTERING/SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP (SGO)**  
**CASE STUDY ON CHILD S AGE 29 MONTHS OLD**

**Child**

S presents as a happy and sociable child. S has no identified health or developmental needs. However, due to her early life experiences her attachment development was impacted. She has recently begun to attend nursery for up to 15 hours per week (funded under the vulnerable 2 yr. olds scheme).

**Child background**

S has been subject to a Child Protection Plan under categories of Neglect and Emotional harm since 2013. This is due to concerns around domestic violence in her parents relationship, her father's heroin use, concerns around inappropriate parenting and her mother's mental health.

In July 2013 S sustained a burn to her arm. Her mother did not seek appropriate medical care and waited four days before she informed the social worker she was working with about the burn. Mother was advised to take S to the G.P.

The paediatrician raised serious concern in relation to the burn on S's arm and a bruise she had observed on S's cheek. Both these injuries she felt were non-accidental injuries. S was initially placed with maternal grandmother over the weekend. Due to the level of concerns the Local Authority attended Court and obtained an Interim Care Order. S was subsequently placed into Local Authority Foster Care whilst assessments were going.

Assessments of parents were not positive and therefore alternative suitable care was needed. If it was deemed there were no suitable carers in the family network for S the plan would have been adoption. Then J came forward and was assessed. Initially S's birth mother was not agreeing for her daughter to be placed in J's care and opposed this plan. J was subsequently approved as a foster carer and S moved to her care in January 2014.

**Carer Background**

J is a 44 year old female and is a mother to seven children. J is a warm natured and caring person, and takes great pride and enjoyment from helping others. Children are a focus of her priorities and she wants best for her children. She appears to have a good level of resilience. J works in a primary school as a playground supervisor five days per week for 2 hours per day. In addition, J is a volunteer at her church which includes volunteering at the kids club.

**Kinship connection**

J is not blood related to S, however, she was deemed as a suitable kinship connected person to the family as J has known the birth family for over twenty years and her eldest two daughters maintain regular links with S's birth family, as they are linked by being second

cousins. J's relationship is primarily with S's maternal grandmother. Knowing the family for over twenty years, J knew S's mother when she was a child herself. J felt that she was in a position to help and that she can provide a suitable home for S. J believes that it is important for children to know who their birth parents are and that maintain a link with them, if possible.

### **Reason for case to move from fostering to SGO**

J is providing S with a warm and safe home environment, which also provides her with boundaries and routines. S has formed an attachment to J and appears to be very content with J. S is very settled in the home and has been accepted as part of the family by all of J's children. S's behaviour has improved during her time living with J, such as her hair pulling and head banging.

S's mother is no longer posing difficulties for J and the family and is more accepting that she cannot parent S herself.

J feels she could offer love, care and protection for S, whilst being in a position to also maintain birth family links.

J is providing S with a high standard of individual care. She clearly understands S's past history and what the risks the parents pose. J is very child focused in her parenting style and has a good understanding of a child's developing and growing needs.

### **Move to Special Guardianship (SGO)**

S was placed in J's care early in 2014. After an initial short period of instability, S has settled well into the home. S has established herself well to her new home life and she is thriving in all aspects of her development.

J views that she has *"a great bond and she is one of our family and has fitted in like the missing jigsaw piece. We want to see her grow up and lead her in the right way of life and give her the love she deserves just like any one of my children and give her encouragement she needs in school life to working adult life"*.

### **Promoting contact**

J is committed to promoting the contact between S and her parents. Her primary reasons to care for S were for her to maintain and know her family. The current care plan was for S's parents to have separate direct contact 4 times a year. Despite assurances by S's father he has resumed his drug use. It therefore has been stipulated that father needs to meet with the local authority prior to contact resuming again. Father has always supported his daughter living with J. S's mother was never in support for S to live with J, this view has since changed after mediation has taken place between both parties and J now supervises this contact.

**SGO support**

J is a self-sufficient carer who has required little support from the Department during her time as a kinship foster carer. She will continue to receive financial support, equivalent to fostering allowances for 2 years after the court order has been made. She will have access to the SGO support group, advice line and also consultation service provided by the therapeutic Social Work Service should this be needed in the future.

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