

# Babysitting

*"Leaving Natalie with anyone is difficult, but I really need to have a break sometimes. I would worry all the time if I could not rely on and trust the person looking after my child. I'm really glad I spent the time I did finding the right babysitter."*

- Children rely on their parents for their safety
- Your child has the right to care which is free from harm
- Make sure your child gets the best quality care
- Select your babysitter carefully
- Avoid leaving your child with someone under 16
- Ensure your babysitter can be contacted in an emergency

## Who can I leave my child with?

As parents you have responsibility for the safety and well being of your children. As a result it is important that you think very carefully about the person you are going to leave them with, whether this is a stranger, close relative or a friend.

When you leave your child in the care of someone else you are taking a risk with his or her safety and welfare. When considering a temporary carer for your child it is important that you choose someone with the abilities and high standards that you would expect of yourself. This includes someone who will make sure they are fed, changed, kept safe, given room to play, feel secure and can deal with difficulties which may occur.

Generally a babysitter will come to your home to take care of your child. Make sure you talk to your babysitter before you leave. Let them know when to expect you back and make sure they have contact details in case of emergencies.

Babysitters do not need qualifications or a certificate to look after children. As a result anyone can advertise his or her services as a babysitter. The Children's Legal Centre and the NSPCC recommend that the minimum age of a babysitter should be 16 years of age. This is based on the idea that at 16 and above, an individual is much more aware of potential dangers and risks and could seek help quickly if necessary.

This age limit is also linked with the possible action which could be taken by the police if anything were to go wrong and an injury resulted. It is most likely that you as a parent would be held responsible if anything goes wrong if your babysitter is under 16 years of age.

Often a good babysitter will have a good reputation locally and can be recommended by a friend or neighbour. However it is essential that you meet personally with the prospective babysitter before you decide to leave your child in their care.

Babysitting courses are becoming increasingly available for young people to attend. You should ask if babysitters have attended any of these or accessed any other training.

## WARNING SIGNS

*Children will not always be able to tell you if something is wrong, so note changes in their mood, behaviour and physical appearance. Agree with the babysitter to discuss, from the beginning, all accidents and incidents.*

## ACTION

*Use people you trust to care for your child or ask them to recommend someone. Speak to other families who have used the babysitter you are considering.*

## WHAT TO SAY

*Tell the babysitter all about your child's routine and their likes and dislikes.*

*Tell the babysitter about your rules, like no smacking.*

*Always leave a contact number in case of emergencies.*

## PREVENTION

*Make sure you feel completely comfortable about your babysitter before you leave your child in their care.*

## CONTACTS

- Ask Wiltshire  
08457 585 072
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) 0121 248 2000
- NSPCC 0808 800 5000

*Check the Wiltshire ACPC website for the latest phone numbers:  
[www.wiltshire.gov.uk](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk)*