

Babysitting

There is no law which states the minimum age that a child can be left alone but it is an offence to leave a child alone when doing so puts the child at risk. The NSPCC recommend that most children under 13 should not be left for more than a short period and that no child under 16 should be left overnight. They suggest that parents consider the following before deciding to leave a child alone:

- the age of the child
- the child's level of maturity and understanding
- the place where the child will be left
- how long the child will be left alone and how often
- whether or not there are any other children in the household

Further advice on good practice when leaving children alone can be obtained by looking at the RoSPA or NSPCC websites (search for babysitting) or by ringing the NSPCC helpline on 0808 800 5000.

Finding a childminder or babysitter

As babysitters are not "registered" and there are no regulations to govern this type of childcare, the Family Information Service don't hold lists of individual people only babysitting agencies. However, we do hold lists of all registered childminders and some childminders may be willing to do some evening or weekend babysitting.

Parents may also wish to find a sitter by asking a friend or a relative with children for a recommendation or by looking in the Yellow Pages or searching the internet for babysitting agencies. Should you use a babysitting agency, it is important that you are clear as to how they vet their sitters, for example, do they interview and take up references and **do they complete a Disclosure and barring check previously known as a Criminal Records Bureau check?**

Choosing a babysitter

When deciding to use a babysitter remember to:

- Follow your instincts - if in doubt don't use them.
- Ask for at least two references and contact the referees yourself.
- Choose a babysitter over 16 years old.
- Listen to your child about any issue of babysitting that they are unhappy about.
- If your child is unhappy about your babysitter, find someone else.
- Only use registered childminders. A list is kept by your local authority Family Information Service.

Both the NSPCC and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) recommend that babysitters should be over 16 years of age and that parents ask for at least two references and contact the referees themselves.

RoSPA also suggest that parents complete "risk assessments" and think through all possible eventualities before leaving their children with a babysitter. Further tips on good practices when using a babysitter are available from both the NSPCC and RoSPA - contact details as above.

Remember, you know what is best for your child. Ask questions and find out as much as you can then follow your feelings.

Contact the Family Information Service if you want to find out more about childcare funding which is available for some 2 year olds and free early education funding for 3 & 4 year olds.

Solihull Family Information Service offers impartial information relating to Childcare, activities and support services.

Family Information Service is here to help, if you need any assistance finding childcare please contact us on 0800 389 8667

Would you like to know what's happening in Solihull for children and families? Then join our Parent's Network for regular information at www.solihull.gov.uk/parentsnetwork

Solihull Family Information Service

Call: 0800 389 8667

Email: familyinfo@solihull.gov.uk

Web: www.solihull.gov.uk/familyinfo



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