

“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.”

Who can I leave my child with?

As parents, the safety and well-being of your child is up to you. 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 friend.

When thinking about 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 and feel secure and who can deal with difficulties which may happen.



Generally a babysitter will come to your home to take care of your child. Make sure you talk to them 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 become a babysitter. The Children’s Legal Centre and NSPCC advise that the minimum age of a babysitter should be 16 years of age. This is based on the idea that at 16 and above, a young person understands possible dangers and risks, and could get help quickly if needed.

This age limit is also linked with the possible action that could be taken by the Police if anything were to go wrong and an injury occurred. It is most likely that, if your babysitter is under 16 years old, you as a parent would be held responsible if anything were to go wrong. Often a good babysitter will be well thought of locally and can be recommended by a friend or neighbour. However, it is very important that you and your child meet with them first before deciding to leave your child in their care.

Do not leave your child in the care of anyone you feel uncomfortable about, even if that means missing an evening out, or work. Try to plan in advance so you have plenty of time to meet the babysitter beforehand.



Warning Signs:

Children will not always be able to tell you if something is wrong; note changes in mood, behaviour and appearance. Agree with the babysitter to discuss all accidents & anything unusual which may happen in their care.



Action:

Use people you trust to care for your child or ask them to recommend someone. Speak to other families who may have used the babysitter in the past.



What to say:

Tell the babysitter all about your child's routine, the things they like and dislike. Tell them about your rules (i.e. no smacking) and 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:

SureStart: www.gov.uk/find-sure-start-childrens-centre

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents: 0121 248 2000 www.rospa.com

NSPCC: 0808 800 5000 www.nspcc.org.uk