

Choosing a babysitter



Camden Safeguarding
Children Board



What is babysitting?

Babysitting is a service that you arrange with someone you trust who you may pay to look after your children, usually in your own home. It is an informal and private arrangement which allows you to go out knowing your child is in safe hands.

This leaflet tells you more about what you might need to think about when arranging your babysitter.

There is no law that states the minimum age that a child can be left alone but it is a criminal offence to leave a child alone when doing so puts the child at risk. The NSPCC recommends that only a child over the age of 13 should be left alone and only for a short period. We recommend that only a child over 16 is left alone overnight.



Who do I choose to babysit?

As parents you have responsibility for the safety and well-being of your children. Although there is no law governing babysitting, it is important that you think very carefully about the person you are going to leave them with, whether it is a relative, a friend or someone you employ.

Here are some suggestions to help you select your babysitter.

- Choose a babysitter who is a friend or relative you know and trust, someone recommended by a friend, or someone from an agency where all the babysitters are registered and checked
- Choose someone who has the skill to make your child feel secure and can manage if your child needs comforting, help to go to bed, feeding or changing
- Make sure they are at least 16 years old. If you take on a babysitter under 16 years then you must be prepared to take responsibility for anything that goes wrong while you are away, which could lead to the police charging you with negligence. Also you have a duty to ensure that your young babysitter is safe, including ensuring that they get home safely.
- Make sure they have experience of caring for babies if you have a young baby
- Check that they can manage in an emergency
- It is preferable for them to have a first aid qualification.

Before the babysitting starts

Once you have chosen your babysitter, here are some tips to make sure everything goes smoothly.

- Encourage your babysitter to visit your home and meet your child before the babysitting starts
- Agree beforehand what the babysitter is expected to do – will they be playing with your child, reading to them, watching television with them, putting your child to bed?
- Make sure your babysitter knows your rules about smoking, alcohol, and friends coming around
- Ensure your babysitter knows your child's health or dietary needs but do not give them medicines to give to your child unless you know them very well
- Make sure your babysitter knows how you manage your child's behaviour
- Ensure you give the babysitter details of how you can be contacted and other contact details of neighbours or family in case they cannot contact you
- Leave emergency numbers such as GP, hospital and police by the telephone in a prominent place.

For further advice on babysitting, contact:

RoSPA www.rospa.com

Camden Family Information Service 020 7974 1679



What if something goes wrong?

If you have any worries that a child or young person is being ill treated by a babysitter, please contact the local authority immediately on 020 7974 6666. In an emergency phone the police on 999. All calls are confidential.

For more information contact:

The National Childminding Association on 0800 169 4486, ncma.org.uk
Working Families Helpline 0800 013 0313, workingfamilies.org.uk

The family information service on 020 7974 1679;
email: fis@camden.gov.uk; website: camden.gov.uk/fis

Phone Camden Council on 020 7974 6666.
In an emergency phone the police on 999.
All calls are confidential.



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