

## Leaving your child on their own

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. Parents can be prosecuted if they leave a child unsupervised 'in a manner likely to cause unnecessary suffering or injury to health'

The NSPCC recommend that:

- Babies and toddlers should never be left home alone.
- Children under 12 years old shouldn't be left home alone for long.
- Children under 16 years old shouldn't be left alone overnight.
- Over 16 year olds shouldn't be left alone frequently for long periods of time or for multiple nights.
- Children should never be left in a home that could put them at risk – like with no electricity or heat, or with dangerous objects.

You can find more information and advice about leaving a child home alone at the NSPCC website (search for babysitting) or by ringing the NSPCC helpline on 0800 800 5000.

## Finding a childminder or babysitter

As babysitters are not "registered" with Ofsted 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 checks)?**

## 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.
- NSPCC recommend that babysitters should be over 16 years of age and that parents ask for at least two references and contact the referees themselves.

Further tips on good practices when using a babysitter are available from the NSPCC.

**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/children-and-family-support/solihullparentsnetwork](http://www.solihull.gov.uk/children-and-family-support/solihullparentsnetwork)

**Solihull Family Information Service**

**Call: 0800 389 8667**

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**Web: [www.solihull.gov.uk/familyinfo](http://www.solihull.gov.uk/familyinfo)**



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