

## **Wakefield District Families Information Service**

Room 201, County Hall, Wakefield, WF1 2QW

Tel: 0800 587 8042 E-mail: [cis@wakefield.gov.uk](mailto:cis@wakefield.gov.uk)

Website: [www.wakefieldcis.org.uk](http://www.wakefieldcis.org.uk)

### **Choosing a Sitter**

A Babysitter, or Sitter, comes to your home to look after your children for short periods of time, usually during the evenings or at weekend.

Usually sitters are members of the family or close friends who will know your child. Sometimes parents may need to use someone they have found through an agency.

#### **Why Choose a Sitter?**

At some time most parents will need to rely on someone to watch their children whilst they go out, this could be social or work related. The challenge for most is finding someone they are comfortable with and have the confidence in to care for their children.

#### **Are they registered?**

As the care is taking place in the child's own home there is no need for the care to be registered. Also, there is no law in England to stop anyone of any age babysitting, but it is important to note that a person under the age of 16 years cannot be charged with neglect or ill treatment of a child left in their care.

If you choose to use a sitter under the age of 16 in your home, then you are responsible for them as well as your own children.

#### **Are they qualified?**

Most sitters will not have any formal qualifications but you should be looking for someone who has experience looking after children. If your sitter is from an agency they may have some childcare training and also have had a police check or references check - always ask agencies how they have screened any of their sitters.

## **What should I be looking for?**

You should always try to meet the sitter before you ask them to come and care for your children. Always ask for the names of at least 2 people you can contact for references and check them out. Arrange for the sitter to come and meet your child/ren and watch how they talk and play with them. How did they get on with them?

Also, ask whether the sitter has any first aid training. It might be a good idea for them to attend a first aid for children training course if they are likely to sit for you regularly.

## **What to do before you go out:**

- Always allow some time for your children and the sitter to be together with you present, either at a meeting before the first care session or ask the sitter to arrive about half an hour before you go out. It could be very upsetting for a child to wake up and find a stranger in the house.
- an emergency.
- Give them a tour of the house and show them where all your child's essentials are kept.
- Show them all the exits to the house along with the keys for window locks.
- Make sure the sitter is aware of your child's likes, dislikes, routine and rules especially if your child has any allergies or special needs.
- Always make your house rules clear. Let them know whether you are happy for them to play music or have a friend with them.
- Make it perfectly clear that your child is their first priority.
- Provide them with refreshments.

## **What information you should leave:**

- Give the sitter a contact number for you when you're out, and the number of a local neighbour, relative or friend who would be able to help in an emergency.
- Make sure they know where the 'phone is and the address of your house in case of an emergency.

## **When you get home:**

- Ask the sitter how things went. Were there any problems? Any questions? How did the children behave? Ask your children the same questions.
- Make sure they have safe transport home.

### **How much does a Sitter cost?**

There is no set rate of pay for sitters, so you will have to agree a rate with the sitter themselves and this should be done in advance. It is usual to pay more after midnight and on Bank Holidays.

A sitter from an agency would usually have a set payment rate.

### **How do I find a Sitter?**

First of all try asking family, friends and neighbours if they can recommend someone. You could also place an advert in the local paper or ask any colleges that teach childcare courses if they can put up a notice for you.

Also, you can contact Wakefield District Children's Information Service for a list of sitter agencies. Just call 0800 587 8042 or e-mail [cis@wakefield.gov.uk](mailto:cis@wakefield.gov.uk).

### **What to do if you have any concerns.**

This is only a guide. In the end you must be your own judge of what is best for you and your child. However, if you have any concerns there are a number of organisations who may be able to help:

#### **Other useful contacts and web sites:**

- **Wakefield District Families Information Service**  
Telephone: 0800 5878042  
E-mail address: [cis@wakefield.gov.uk](mailto:cis@wakefield.gov.uk)  
Website address: [www.wakefieldcis.org.uk](http://www.wakefieldcis.org.uk)  
Address: Room 201, County Hall, Bond Street,  
Wakefield, WF1 2QW

For information on all registered childcare, play and education provision in the Wakefield District. We also hold information about working in childcare and training courses.