

How to find a babysitter you can trust

As a parent, getting some 'you time' can sometimes seem like an impossible task. Whether you've arranged a night out with friends, planned a regular yoga class, or simply want to do something different, how do you find someone you can trust to look after your kids? If you are one of the few who live close to a supportive family you may find yourself the envy of friends, but even if you don't there are lots of options says Tanya Petherick Director of Class Of Their Own's Babysitting and Childminding service.

Family support is undoubtedly great and family members are often called upon to provide cheap (and often free) childcare. This is clearly an excellent option, and grandparents in particular love to be able to spend time with their grandchildren. The only time this arrangement tends not to work is if you want to stay out later than your sitter is comfortable with, or if you all want to go out together! So what are the alternatives?

Community spirit may well be thriving on your street and you may be able to find a friendly neighbour who would be willing to swap a favour. If they have children of their own they won't be put off by crying and nappies, however, as parents themselves they will have pressure on their time too so you will need to make sure that the arrangements are beneficial to both parties.

Using teenagers of friends and family is a great idea, but before you leave your children in their care, you need to ask yourself some questions. Will the sitter be able to fulfil your child's needs? Are they trustworthy and sensible? Do you need to pay them, and how much? Do you feel happy relying on them if something goes wrong? Do you trust them to not drink the contents of your alcohol cupboard? Do you know the teenager well enough to make a good judgement of their character? Sitting and watching television whilst the child

sleeps requires less skill and experience than actually having to look after a child who is wide awake, who demands food and entertainment.

Sensible teenagers are more than capable of looking after children who are sleeping, and provided you feel comfortable leaving them in your home they will be a cheap option to cover your night out.

All babysitters, not just teenagers, need guidelines. Some families feel comfortable in asking the sitter to make themselves fully at home, and to help themselves to food, drink, television, DVDs, and to use a computer and telephone. Welcoming the sitter to this extent is not at all necessary, however, it is absolutely necessary for the sitter to know exactly what he or she can do whilst they are looking after your child. Additionally, they need to know as much information about your child as possible - such as what to do if they wake up, what they like to drink, where their favourite toy is kept, and if they are not in bed, what the bed or teatime routine is.

Another option is to call in the professionals and use a babysitting agency. These agencies can provide a high level of service and are invaluable for people who do not have an extensive network of friends and family to call upon. As with anything, not all agencies are the same, and they are not

regulated, so you need to check what they are offering. Are the babysitters qualified? In other words are they CRB checked, first aid trained and child protection trained? Whilst these qualifications are not necessary when you are leaving your child with a friend, you should expect this from a professional agency.

Additionally, any babysitting service should be flexible and offer you a guaranteed babysitter. Check the prices as

they can vary greatly - you don't want to end up paying a hefty membership fee when you really only wanted a babysitter for one night. If you find a good babysitting agency you'll be paying professionals, so you can expect and demand a certain level of service without the 'hassle' of your mother-in-law or the unpredictability of a local teenager!

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Class Of Their Own At Home offer **high quality** babysitting and childcare services at **great prices**. As a member we can guarantee you a babysitter or childcarer to come to your home at **anytime day or evening**, to look after your children of **any age**. We offer great member prices for all but can also offer one-off bookings.

- Guaranteed service provided to members (with 24 hours notice)
- Quality babysitters and childminders who are police checked, first aid trained and child protection trained
- Very low membership fees and one-off booking fees
- No booking fees for members
- No cost for babysitter's travel before midnight.

For more information or to make a booking please contact the Babysitting Co-ordinator on 01273 732868 or babysitting@classoftheirown.com www.classoftheirown.com/athome