

# Safeguarding 7-minute briefing: Children at home alone

## Further information

The NSPCC has further information about children being at home alone including ways in which you can begin to prepare your child.

If you are concerned about a child being left at home alone, please speak to your school's DSL.

## What does the law say?

The law does not say an age when you can leave a child on their own, but it's an offence to leave a child alone if it places them at risk. Parents can be prosecuted if they leave a child unsupervised 'in a manner likely to cause unnecessary suffering or injury to health'. If your child has an older sibling, you might feel you can leave them home together, especially if one child is older. There's no legal age a child can babysit – but if you leave your children with someone who's under 16, you're still responsible for their wellbeing.

## Covid-19: What if I have to work?

Children may be at home more due to Covid-19, yet parents are needing to work. If you cannot work from home talk to your employer to make them aware of your childcare situation and to find out about the options you have available to you.

## What about secondary aged children?

The NSPCC don't recommend that children under 16 are left alone at night, and older children shouldn't be alone on a frequent basis. Whether they're 12 years old or almost 18 years old, there might be reasons that they don't feel safe in the house alone. Just because your child is older doesn't necessarily mean they are ready to look after themselves or know what to do in an emergency.



## What does the NSPCC say?

Babies and toddlers should never be left alone.  
Children under 12 shouldn't be left home alone for long.  
Children under 16 shouldn't be left alone overnight  
Children over 16 years shouldn't be left alone frequently for long periods of time or for multiple nights.

## What about babies and toddlers?

Infants and young children aged 0-3 years old should never be left alone – even for 15 minutes while you pop down the road. This applies not just to leaving them home alone but also in your car while you run into the shops or in another room on their own.

## What about primary aged children?

While every child is different, the NSPCC don't recommend leaving a child under 12 years old home alone, particularly for longer periods of time. Children in primary school aged 4-11 are usually too young to walk home from school alone, babysit or cook for themselves without adult supervision.

[Click here for quiz](#)

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While every child is different, the NSPCC don't recommend leaving a child under 12 years old home alone, particularly for longer periods of time. Children in primary school aged 6-12 are usually too young to walk home from school alone, babysit or cook for themselves without adult supervision.