

AWARD WINNING CARE FOR LITTLE ONES

We talk to the Wimbledon Babysitting Agency, who have just won 'Best Customer Service' at the Merton Business Awards to find out what sets them apart from other childcare providers, and why they can be trusted to look after your child



WINNER

Wimbledon Babysitting Agency

16 Crescent Gardens, Wimbledon, SW19 8AJ
020 8739 0878
caroline@wimbledonbabysitting.co.uk
www.wimbledonbabysitting.co.uk

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Tell us a bit about your business? We are a local agency, providing both evening and ad-hoc daytime childcare services to parents in Wimbledon and south west London. We now have over 230 local sitters and 800 parents who are members of the agency.

How did you get into your chosen career? I started the Wimbledon Babysitting Agency nine years ago when my son was six months old. We had our first social event to go to and I was so nervous about leaving him with anyone.

Like a lot of families in the area, we don't have any family living locally and no-one we trusted enough to sit for us. I decided I wanted to establish a babysitting service providing high quality professional childcarers that would offer them reassurance that their children would be in the best care possible. This would allow parents more flexibility and improved social lives when they needed childcare.

With three years of experience as a nanny, 11 years in executive recruitment, and nine years as a mum behind me, I feel I have the best skills to select the most exceptional childcarers out there.

What do you enjoy about what you do? I know, from having been there myself, what a scary and daunting prospect it is leaving your little ones in the care of someone you don't know.

I am always at the other end of the phone to guide and reassure parents through the process. I want my parents to feel 100% comfortable and that is why I only take on the most exceptional childcarers, who are currently working in professional childcare.

The most satisfying part of my job is having parents contact me after the first sit to say thank you, and to see how relieved and happy they are that they can now regain their social lives knowing that they are able to leave their most prized possessions in the safest of hands.

What have been the high and low points of your career to date? The high point was winning the 'Best Customer Service' category at this year's Merton Best Business Awards, as well as being nominated for the last two years in the 'Customer Service Excellence' categories.

For me I was particularly happy to win this award as it was the only category decided by a public vote. According to the judges, we won 'by a clear mile' which was wonderful to hear! To know that so many of my customers think we provide such an outstanding service that they took the time to vote for us was overwhelming.

Another high point is being ranked as the UK's Best Babysitting Service by Freeindex (with an average score of 4.9 out of 5 based on 273 parent reviews). However, continuously looking for the very best professional childcarers out there is always challenging.

Unlike other childcare providers, we only take on sitters who have at least three years of professional childcare experience - as well as having DBS checks and being fully referenced. Most are local nannies, teachers, maternity nurses or nursery nurses. This means that many of our sitters have chosen childcare as a career, because it is something they love doing and are passionate about.

When I am interviewing the question that is always at the forefront of my mind is: 'would I feel 100% comfortable leaving my children in the care of this person?' If there is any doubt whatsoever in my mind, then they are not taken on our books.

Because we are very much a local business, most of my sitters are taken on through recommendations- either from my trusted sitters, our parents, or through local childcarers I have met through being a mum in the local area.

Having been established for nine years, many of our sitters have been on my books for a long period of time, and have built up great relationships with our Parents. Many have become good friends of the families they work for, in fact, I had one of our families attend their sitters' wedding this year!

Lastly, I am always at the other end of the phone for my parents, 24/7.

What can you offer Parents that your competitors can't? First and foremost, it's about the quality of our sitters. I also offer a very personal and tailored service. I will always look at a family's profile before matching them with a sitter - no computer algorithms in sight!

For example, I often find that toddler and school-age children are best matched with those sitters who are dynamic, fun and have lots of energy! I generally find that parents with newborn and younger babies are offered more reassurance when paired with sitters who are perhaps mums themselves, or maternity nurses / nannies.

What has been your best business decision to date? My best business decision to date has been to keep the service a very local one - I have felt that this has ensured the exceptional and consistent quality of our childcarers, ensuring I am able to provide a tailored, personal service to each and every one of my clients.