

# Young people at work

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## 1. Overview

When you employ young people under the age of 18, you have the same responsibilities for their health, safety and welfare as you do for other workers. This applies whether they are:

- a worker
- on work experience
- an apprentice

### Risks to young people

Young people are likely to be new to the workplace and so are at more risk of injury in the first six months of a job, as they may be less aware of risks. They will often be vulnerable, as they may:

- lack experience or maturity
- not have reached physical maturity and lack strength
- be eager to impress or please people they work with
- be unaware of how to raise concerns

### Training and supervision

Young people need clear and sufficient instruction, training and supervision so they understand the importance of health and safety and can work without putting themselves and other people at risk. They may need more supervision than adults.

### Work experience

Work experience and work-based learning will be the first time most young people experience the work environment.

Good preparation and organisation of placements is essential if these opportunities are to be helpful and safe introductions to work.

## Health and safety representatives

If your workplace has health and safety representatives, they can play a valuable role early on by:

[Introducing the young person to the workplace](#)<sup>[1]</sup>

[Helping with their ongoing training](#)<sup>[2]</sup>

[Advice for parents and carers](#)<sup>[3]</sup>

[Schools and colleges](#)<sup>[4]</sup>

[Work experience organisers](#)<sup>[5]</sup>

[New to the job](#)<sup>[6]</sup>

## Link URLs in this page

1. **Introducing the young person to the workplace**  
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/young-workers/employer/risks.htm>
2. **Helping with their ongoing training**  
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/young-workers/employer/training.htm>
3. **Advice for parents and carers**  
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/young-workers/parents-carers.htm>
4. **Schools and colleges**  
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/young-workers/schools-colleges.htm>
5. **Work experience organisers**  
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/young-workers/organisers.htm>
6. **New to the job**  
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/vulnerable-workers/new-to-the-job.htm>

## 2. Risks to young people at work

As an employer, you should already be managing any significant risks for all workers in your workplace. But you should assess any additional factors if you employ a young person, such as a health condition which may be affected by the work or the work environment.

## Employing a young person for the first time

If you are employing a young person for the first time, or employing one with particular needs, you should review your risk assessment before they start.

You do not need to do a separate risk assessment for work experience students, as long as your existing assessment already considers the specific factors for young people.

## If you already employ a young person

If you employ a young person already, or have done recently, your existing arrangements for assessment and management of the risks for new young people should be enough. This is providing that the new starter is of a similar level of maturity and understanding, and has no particular needs, such as a disability.

## Greatest risks to young people

For many young people the workplace will be a new environment and they will be unfamiliar with 'obvious' risks and the behaviour expected of them.

They may lack experience or maturity. Make sure they understand what is expected of them, check they understand and are able to remember and follow instructions.

They may not have reached physical maturity and be more at risk if their muscle strength is not fully developed. They may be less skilled in handling techniques or in pacing work according to their ability.

When assessing a young person's physical capability, you could simply ask yourself if a still developing young person could lift the weights older, more experienced workers can.

Young people may be unaware of how to raise concerns, so make sure this is part of their [training](#).

They may be eager to impress or please people they work with, so you should supervise them effectively and make sure they understand any [training and instruction](#).

## Levels of risk

### Low risk environments

For placements in low-risk environments, such as offices or shops, with everyday risks that will mostly be familiar to the young person or student, your existing arrangements for other workers should be enough.

## Less familiar risks

For environments with risks less familiar to them (for example in light assembly or packing facilities), you should make arrangements to manage the risks. This should include induction, supervision, site familiarisation, and any protective equipment needed.

## High-risk environments

For work in a higher-risk environment such as construction, agriculture and manufacturing:

- consider the work they will be doing or observing, the risks involved and how they are managed
- satisfy yourself that the instruction, training and supervisory arrangements have been properly thought through and work in practice

Consider specific factors that must be managed for young people, including exposure to:

- radiation
- noise and vibration
- toxic substances
- extreme temperatures

Where these exist, you should already have control measures in place.

Harmful exposure means exposure that has long-term health effects on a still-developing young body. You should be aware of the substances they might come into contact with, consider exposure levels and ensure legal limits are met.

Also consider legally required age limits on the use of some equipment and machinery (for example forklift trucks and some woodworking machinery).

## Written risk assessment

If you have fewer than 5 employees you do not need to do a written risk assessment. If a work experience student increases your staff to 5 you do not need to do a written risk assessment for this temporary period.

# 3. Training and supervision

Many young people are likely to be new to the workplace and facing unfamiliar risks from the job and their surroundings. You should give them clear and sufficient instruction, training and supervision so they can work without putting themselves and other people at risk.

## Training

Consider how much training they need – it should be proportionate to the risk. For a student on a short-term work experience placement, tailor induction and training to the tasks they are going to do.

Check they have understood the instruction and training, including, for example the:

- hazards and risks in the workplace
- health and safety precautions in place

## Supervision

Young people are likely to need more supervision than adults. Good supervision will help you get a clear idea of their capabilities and their progress in the job. It will also help you monitor the effectiveness of their training.

They may need additional support to allow them to carry out their work without putting themselves and others at risk, such as tailored training or closer supervision.

Regularly checking a young person's progress will help identify where any additional adjustments may be needed. It's often appropriate to put age limits on the use of some equipment and machinery, such as forklift trucks and some woodworking machinery.

# 4. Work experience

As an employer taking on a young person for work experience, you have the main responsibility for their health and safety. Always check they know how to raise health and safety concerns.

Under health and safety law, work experience students are your employees, like any other young person you employ. There are very few work activities a student cannot do because of health and safety law.

## Risk assessment

What you cover in your risk assessment depends on the [level of risk](#).

Review your risk assessment before they start if you:

- do not currently employ a young person
- have not employed a young person in the last few years
- are taking on a work experience student for the first time
- are taking on a work experience student with particular needs

If you have employed a young person on work experience in the last few years, don't repeat your risk assessment if the new student has a similar level of maturity and understanding, with no particular or additional needs. (The organiser or parent should tell you if they have.)

Talk about the placement in advance with organisers and take account of what they and the parents or carers tell you about:

- the student's physical and psychological capacity
- any particular needs - for example due to any health conditions or learning difficulties

Explain to [parents/carers of children](#) what the significant risks are and what has been done to control them. You can do this in whatever way is simplest and suitable, including verbally, and is very often done via the school or college.

When you induct students, explain the risks and how they are controlled, checking that they understand what they have been told.

## Insurance

Your existing employers' [liability insurance](#) policy will cover work placements provided your insurer is a member of the [Association of British Insurers \(ABI\)](#), or [Lloyds](#), so there is no need for you to get any additional employer's liability insurance if you take on work experience students. The [ABI](#) website confirms this.

For many insurers, a definition of who is to be treated as an 'employee' would include:

- any person employed under a contract of service or apprenticeship
- people on work experience schemes, for example students

If in doubt, check with your insurer.

If you don't currently require employers' liability insurance and are going to take on a work placement, discuss the situation with your insurer to check you have adequate insurance cover.

- [Schools and colleges](#)
- [Work experience organisers](#)

## 5. Apprentices

As an employer, in most cases, you have the same health and safety responsibilities for apprentices of all ages. For apprentices who are under 18, you have the same responsibilities as for other young workers.

The responsibilities of a training provider, unless it is an [Apprenticeship Training Agency](#), are the same as those of a [work placement organiser](#).

### England and Wales

#### Apprenticeship training agency

Where apprenticeship training agency (ATA) services are used to source, arrange and find a host for an apprenticeship, the agency is the apprentice's employer. The ATA and the host organisation should work together to ensure risks are effectively controlled.

There is advice on how organisations should cooperate to ensure the same level of health and safety protection as for other workers in our guidance on [gig economy, agency and temporary workers](#).

#### Training providers

Training providers include all those who arrange or fill apprentice vacancies. This includes third-party sub-contractors and those who are only involved in organising the off-the-job training element of the apprenticeship.

Employers have the primary responsibility for the health and safety of the apprentice and should be managing any significant risks. Training providers should take reasonable steps to satisfy themselves that the employer is doing this.

This doesn't mean second guessing an employer's risk assessment or risk control measures. You are not required to carry out your own workplace assessment.



Providers can rely on past experience, for example, if the employer is familiar to them and they have a good track record on health and safety. Keep checks in proportion to the environment.

## Scotland

### Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland

All apprentices in modern apprenticeships are employed. Where a third party is involved in organising or funding the off-the-job training element of the apprenticeship, they are primarily responsible for the health and safety of the apprentice while they are doing the training and should manage any significant risks. You should satisfy yourself that the third party is doing this.

### Foundation Apprenticeships in Scotland

Where a school student takes up a foundation apprenticeship and spends some time with an organisation providing vocational work experience, the employer is primarily responsible for the health and safety of the student.

## 6. The law

Under health and safety law, as an employer, you must ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health and safety of all your employees, of any age. As part of this, there are certain considerations that should be made for young people.

### The law applying to the age of a young person or child

A young person is anyone under 18 and a child is anyone who has not yet reached the official minimum school leaving age (MSLA). Pupils will reach the MSLA during the school year in which they turn 16.

Children below the MSLA must not be employed in industrial workplaces such as factories, construction sites, except on work experience.

Children under 13 are generally prohibited from any form of employment. Local authorities have powers to make bye-laws on the types of work, and hours of work, children aged between 13 and the MSLA can do.

### Working hours and young workers



Young people and children have different employment rights from adult workers and are protected in relation to the hours they can work.

## Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations

You have specific duties for young people under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations. You must ensure that any young people you employ are not exposed to risk because of:

- lack of experience
- being unaware of existing or potential risks
- lack of maturity