

Employment rights for young people

There are special employment laws in place to protect the rights of young workers. These include health and safety, what jobs you can and can't do, when you are allowed to work, and how many hours.

These laws are very strict and an employer can be prosecuted for breaking them.

In this article a **young person** refers to anyone aged over school leaving age and up to 18 and a **child** is someone who has not yet reached school leaving age.

Health and safety

All employers must complete a health and safety risk assessment before they employ anyone under 18. If you are under school leaving age, the employer must also give your parent (or guardian) the results of the assessment. This would include any risks identified and any measures put in place.

This does not apply to short term or occasional work in a family business or in a private household.

Minimum age for working

Part time

The youngest age a child can work part time is 13 (there may be some local authority rules on this), with the exception of those involved with sport, television, theatre or modelling. These children must have a chaperone with them, and need to apply for a [performance licence](#).

Full time

You can only start full time employment once you have reached the minimum school leaving age.

In Scotland, if you turn 16 between 1 March and 30 September, you can leave school after 31 May of that year. If you turn 16 between 1 October and the end of February, you can leave school at the start of the Christmas holidays.

Paying children and young people

Children are not entitled to the National Minimum Wage (NMW). Once you reach the age of 16, you are entitled to earn at least £4.20 an hour (from April 2018). For further details, see the article on [National Minimum Wage](#).

Paid holidays from work

If you are under school leaving age you are not legally entitled to paid holiday from work.

If you are over school leaving age, you are entitled to 5.6 weeks of paid holiday leave the same as other workers. This includes public holidays. To work out how many days holiday you can take a year, you need to multiply the number of days you work in a week by 5.6.

Maximum working hours

If you're still at school and under 16, check the hours that you can work. Your school will have information on this from your local council. If you are between 13 and 16, you should apply for a work permit. Your school or council office will have copies of the application form.

- If you are 13 or 14, you can work for up to five hours a day on Saturdays (two hours on Sundays or school days), and for no more than 12 a week during term time and 25 hours a week during your holidays.
- Once you are 15 you can work for up to eight hours a day on Saturdays (two hours on Sundays or school days), and for no more than 35 hours per week during your holidays.
- You can't work more than one hour before school (unless local bylaws allow it).

If you are between school leaving age and 18, you must not work more than eight hours a day, or more than 40 hours a week. There are also rules on rest breaks and working at night. This can vary depending on the industry you work in.

Restrictions on child employment

There are certain restrictions on when and where a child under school leaving age is allowed to work. You are not allowed to work:

- without a work permit issued by your local council education department (if this is required by local bylaws)
- in places like a factory or industrial site
- during school hours
- before 7am or after 7pm
- for more than 4 hours without taking a break of at least 1 hour
- in most jobs in pubs and betting shops
- in any work that may be harmful to your health, wellbeing or education
- without having a 2 week break from any work during the school holidays, every year.

There are also some restrictions for young people on when they can work and the type of work they can do. You are not allowed to:

- work before 7am or after 10pm (there may be some exceptions)
- do any work that brings you into contact with chemicals, toxic material or radiation
- do any work that involves health risks due to extreme conditions, for example cold or heat
- do any work which you are not physically and mentally capable of doing.

More information

More details on employment law for children and young people can be found at:

- [Citizens Advice Scotland](#) website
- [Scottish Government](#) website

