

## Employment Fact Sheet: Young people and employment

This fact sheet applies to young people who are **over school leaving age, and under 18**. Young people can leave school on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they are 16. Young people in this age group who work are known as **young workers**.

If you are under school leaving age, see further help at the end of this fact sheet for where you can find more information.

### General rules on employment of young workers

There are laws to protect the rights of people who work. These cover how much you must be paid, how much holiday you can take, when you can be sacked and so on. There are special laws to protect the rights of young workers. These concern your health and safety, what jobs you can do, when you can work, how many hours you can work, and time off for training. These laws are very strict, and an employer can be prosecuted for breaking them.

### Health and safety at work

If you are a young worker, your employer must do an **assessment** of possible **health and safety** risks, before they employ you. They must pay particular attention to your age, lack of experience, and other things that could be a risk to your health and safety.

There are special restrictions on the following types of work:

- work which you are not physically or mentally capable of doing
- work which brings you into contact with chemical agents, toxic material or radiation
- work which involves a health risk because of extreme cold, heat or vibration.

You are only allowed to do the work above under the following circumstances:

- where it is necessary for your training
- where an experienced person is supervising you
- where any risk is reduced to the lowest level that is reasonable.

These rules do not apply if you are doing short term or occasional work in a family business or in a private household, which is not considered to be harmful to you.

### Hours of work and rest breaks

If you are a young worker, the law says that you must not work more than **eight hours a day**, or more **than 40 hours a week**. You must have **twelve hours rest** between each working day, and **two rest days** per working week. You are also entitled to a **30-minute rest break** when you work for longer than four and a half hours. There are some exceptions to this (see below).

If you stay on at school, a local education and library board can restrict the type of work and number of hours you can do.

**Night work** There are special limits on the hours you can work at night. Y

## Other rights

If you are an **employee**, you will have other rights at work, in addition to those already mentioned. You will probably be an employee, unless you are one of the following:

- a casual worker
- a freelancer
- a subcontractor.

If you are an employee, you will have a **contract of employment**, because you have agreed to work for your employer in return for pay. You will have a contract of employment, even if it is not in writing. The contract must include some minimum rights, given by the law. Your contract may give you more rights than the minimum the law allows, but it cannot give you less. For example, your contract cannot give you less than four weeks paid holiday a year, if you work five days a week.

If your employer breaks your contract of employment, including any of the rights listed below, you may be able to take them to an **industrial tribunal**. You should get help from an experienced employment adviser to do this (see further help at the end of this fact sheet).

Rights you have as an employee include the right:

- to be given a **written statement** of the main terms of your employment, within 2 months of starting work
- to have a written **wage slip**
- **not to be treated unfairly** at work because of your age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religious belief and/or political opinion
- to **notice of dismissal** from work (but you must have worked for your employer for at least one month)
- to a **written reason for dismissal** from work (but you must have worked, in most cases, for your employer for at least one year)
- to **claim compensation** if you are unfairly dismissed (but you must have worked, in most cases, for your employer for at least one year, and you should raise a written grievance against your employer first)
- not to have illegal deductions made from your pay.

You also have the right:-

- to paid **time off work to have a baby**
- to paid **time off work if your partner has had a baby** (but you must have worked for your employer for at least 26 weeks by the end of the 15th week before the baby is due)
- to ask for **flexible working** if you are a parent or care for an adult relative or someone else who lives at your address.

**Time off for study or training If you are an employee aged 16 or 17 and h**

**Contact Details:**

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