

Pay and hours for young workers and apprentices

People under 18

If someone is 15, 16 or 17 years old, they might be legally classed as a 'young worker'. A young worker is someone who has reached school leaving age but is under 18.

School leaving age is different in England, Scotland and Wales. [Check school leaving ages on GOV.UK](#).

The Working Time Regulations 1998 sets the legal working time limits for young workers.

Whether they're [legally classed as an employee or worker](#) can also affect their rights.

If you think an employer is not following the law, it's best to raise the issue with the employer first. [Find out more about raising a problem at work](#).

When young people can start work

A young person can start full-time work once they've reached school leaving age. Before school leaving age, the work they can do is restricted and depends on their local authority.

Between their school leaving age and 18, a young person in England must do one of the following:

- full-time education or training, such as school or college
- work-based learning, such as an apprenticeship
- working or volunteering (for 20 hours or more a week) while in part-time education or training

If someone is concerned that a young person is not doing one of these, they can ask their local authority to investigate.

In Scotland and Wales this law does not apply. Once a young person has reached the minimum school leaving age, they can go into full-time employment.

Working hours and rest breaks for young workers

By law, young workers must not work more than:

- 8 hours a day
- 40 hours a week

They must also have, as a minimum:

- a 30-minute break if their working day is longer than 4.5 hours
- 12 hours' rest in any 24-hour period in which they work (for example, between one working day and the next)

- 48 hours' (2 days) rest taken together, each week or – if there is a good business reason why this is not possible – at least 36 hours' rest, with the remaining 12 hours taken as soon as possible afterwards

[Find out more about making up for missed rest breaks](#)

If a worker is below school leaving age

Working hours for children under school leaving age are restricted.

Employers of children normally need to have a permit from the local council's education department or education welfare service.

[Find more on rules for child employment on GOV.UK](#)

Night working

Young workers must not work during the 'restricted period'. The restricted period is:

- between 10pm and 6am if their contract does not say
- between 11pm and 7am if their contract allows for them to work after 10pm

They can work until midnight or from 4am onwards if it's necessary in the following types of work:

- advertising
- agriculture
- a bakery
- catering
- a hospital or similar
- a hotel, pub or restaurant
- post or newspaper delivery
- retail

But this is only if:

- there are no adult workers available to do the work
- working those hours will not have a negative effect on the young person's education or training

If they do need to work after 10pm or before 7am, the employer must make sure the young worker:

- is supervised by one or more adult workers where necessary for their protection
- has enough rest at another time if they need to work during their normal rest breaks or rest periods

It's against the law for anyone aged under 18 to work between midnight and 4am, even if they do one of the jobs above.

Pay for young workers

Anyone employed and above school leaving age must get paid at least the [National Minimum Wage](#).

Keeping records of young workers' hours

By law, employers must keep records of any young worker's:

- working hours – to make sure they're not working more than 8 hours a day and 40 hours a week
- night work, if they do any – to show they're not working during restricted hours
- health assessments offered before starting any night work and throughout their employment

These records must be kept for 2 years from the date they were made.

Discrimination

Age is a protected characteristic by law under the Equality Act 2010. This means it's against the law to treat someone less favourably because of either:

- their age
- the age they appear to be

[Find out more about age discrimination](#)