

Young People in the Workplace

Introduction

What the law says about young people at work under health and safety law, every employer must ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health and safety of all their employees, irrespective of age. As part of this, there are certain considerations that need to be made for young people.

Putting the requirements into practice should be straightforward and in most cases we will already have the necessary risk management arrangements in place.

Definitions of young people and children by age:

- **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 in the school year in which they turn 16.

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

The [FAQ page](#) on the HSE web site provides further advice on making the necessary considerations contained within these Regulations. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, the University has a responsibility to ensure that young people employed here are not exposed to risk due to:

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

We must consider:

- the layout of the workplace
- the physical, biological and chemical agents they will be exposed to
- how they will handle work equipment
- how the work and processes are organised
- the extent of health and safety training needed
- risks from particular agents, processes and work

These considerations should be straightforward in a low-risk workplace, for example an office.

In higher- risk workplaces such as laboratories, studios and workshops the risks are likely to be greater and will need more attention to ensure they're properly controlled.

We need to consider whether the work the young person will do:

- is **beyond** their [physical](#) or [psychological](#) capacity
 - This doesn't have to be complicated, it could be as simple as checking a young person is capable of safely lifting weights and of remembering and following instructions.
- involves [harmful exposure](#) to substances that are toxic, can cause cancer, can damage or harm an unborn child, or can chronically affect human health in any other way
 - Be aware of substances a young person might come into contact with in their work, consider exposure levels and ensure legal limits are met.
- involves **harmful** exposure to [radiation](#)
 - Ensure a young person's exposure to radiation is restricted and does not exceed the allowed dose limit.
- involves risk of accidents **that cannot reasonably be recognised or avoided** by young people due to their [insufficient attention to safety or lack of experience or training](#)
 - A young person might be unfamiliar with 'obvious' risks. The University should consider the need for tailored training/closer supervision.
- has a risk to health from **extreme** [cold, heat, noise or vibration](#)
 - In most cases, young people will not be at any greater risk than adults and for workplaces that include these hazards it is likely there will already be control measures in place.

A child must never carry out such work involving these risks, whether they are permanently employed or under training such as work experience.

A young person, who is not a child, can carry out work involving these risks if:

- the work is necessary for their training
- the work is properly supervised by a competent person
- the risks are reduced to the lowest level, [so far as reasonably practicable](#).

Providing supervision for young workers and monitoring their progress will help identify where additional adjustments may be needed. The University must let the parents or guardians of any child know the possible risks and the measures put in place to control them. This can be done in whatever way is simplest and suitable, including verbally.

Other issues you need to consider


There are other agents, processes and work that should be taken into account when employing a young person. This is a non-exhaustive list and, if relevant, more information can be found through the links provided:

- [biological agents](#)
- [working with chemicals](#)
- [working with lead and lead processes](#)
- [asbestos](#)
- [working with explosives, including fireworks](#)
- [working with compressed air](#)
- [construction, including demolition](#)
- [electrical safety](#)
- [agriculture](#)
- [manufacturing](#)

Working hours and young workers

Working hours are not governed by health and safety law.

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

More information is available from the Health & Safety Team (email CRHealthandSafety@northumbria.ac.uk) or can be found on the [gov.uk website](#) .

10 January 2017