

Young workers, apprentices and work experience

Workers aged under 18 have extra rights to protect them because of their age.

Whether they're 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](#).

1. Working hours and rest breaks for workers aged 16 or 17

By law, workers aged 16 or 17 must not work more than 8 hours a day and 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 aged under 16

Working hours for children under 16 years old 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

Those aged 16 or 17 must not work after 10pm or before 7am.

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.

You can find more information on night working on the [Health and Safety Executive website](#).

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:

- average weekly working hours – to make sure they're not working more than 8 hours a day or 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. 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 on age discrimination](#).

When young people can start work

By law in England, the minimum school leaving age is 16.

Until they're 18 years old, school-leavers 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

In Scotland and Wales this law does not apply and once young people have reached the minimum school leaving age at 16, they can

go into full-time employment.

Apprentices have the same [rights as other employees](#), including [working hours](#) and [rest breaks](#).

If an apprentice is [aged 16 or 17, they have extra rights](#).

2. Pay

Apprentices have the right to be paid at least the [National Minimum Wage](#).

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Someone doing work experience or an 'internship' might have the [rights of either an employee or worker](#), depending on what terms they have agreed with their employer.

This means they have the same rights as an employee or worker for [working hours](#) and [rest breaks](#).

Pay

Someone doing work experience or an internship has the right to be paid at least the [National Minimum Wage](#), unless they're a student:

- on a placement during a higher education course
- work shadowing

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