

Young Workers and Apprentices

A specific legal duty that most small firms miss completely

A young person is anyone under 18. If you employ one — an apprentice, a school leaver, a son or daughter helping in the yard, somebody on work experience — you have additional duties, and they are among the easiest for an inspector to prove you have not met.

Scope and limitations — read before use

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1. The duties

- You must carry out a **SPECIFIC** risk assessment for young workers **BEFORE** they start, taking account of their inexperience, lack of awareness of risk, and immaturity.
- Where the young person is under the minimum school leaving age, you must tell their parent or guardian the key findings of that assessment and the control measures.
- Young people must not do work beyond their physical or psychological capacity, or involving harmful exposure to agents that are toxic, carcinogenic, or cause heritable genetic damage.
- They must be properly supervised — closer supervision than an adult doing the same work.
- Working time restrictions apply to under-18s, which is an employment law matter as well as a safety one.

On farms, the Prevention of Accidents to Children in Agriculture Regulations 1998 make it unlawful to allow a child under 13 to ride on or drive most agricultural self-propelled machines, including tractors. No one under 16 should operate adult-sized ATVs. Nine children have died on British farms in the last five years.

2. Young worker risk assessment

Field	Entry
Name	
Age / date of birth	
Under minimum school leaving age? Y/N	
Role and tasks	
Start date	
Supervisor	

Consideration	Assessment	Controls / restrictions
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Inexperience and lack of awareness of risk		
Immaturity and susceptibility to peer pressure or bravado		
Physical capacity — strength, reach, stamina		
Layout of the workplace and the workstation		
Exposure to noise, vibration, dust or chemicals		
Work equipment and machinery they may encounter		
Work at height		
Vehicles and site traffic		
Extent of supervision required		
Training needed before any task		
Anything they must NOT do under any circumstances		

3. Prohibited and restricted tasks — decide these explicitly

List here what this young person must NOT do. Be specific and be conservative. It is far easier to lift a restriction later than to explain an injury.

Task	Prohibited / Restricted / Permitted with supervision	Review date
Operating any powered machine or plant		
Driving or riding on vehicles		
Work at height		
Work in or near excavations		
Lifting operations, slinging or marshalling		
Use of abrasive wheels or cutting equipment		
Work with hazardous substances		
Working alone		
Working near moving vehicles		
Hot work		

4. Parent or guardian notification (under school leaving age only)

Provide the key findings of the risk assessment and the control measures in place. Keep a copy.

Field	Entry
Parent or guardian name	
Information provided on (date)	

Method (letter, email, meeting)	
Key findings communicated	
Acknowledged? Y/N	

Assessed by	Supervisor	Date	Review date