

young workers



**a guide for safety
representatives**



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Every month a worker aged under 25 is killed at work and over 300 suffer a major injury. For some young workers the repercussions are felt for the rest of their lives.

Young people can be at particular risk in the workplace because they lack judgement gained through training and experience. The law recognises this by restricting the employment of young persons in certain high-risk activities and by requiring them to be instructed, trained and supervised to higher standards than for adults. Yet many employers do not follow the law. A TUC survey showed that 37 per cent of 15- to 24-year-olds had not had any legally required health and safety training.

Employers are duty-bound to make a specific risk assessment for under-18s that takes particular account of the inexperience, lack of awareness of risks and immaturity of young persons, and then to protect them specifically from any additional risk that arises from those. Employers cannot get young workers to work in





any risky environment where they could be exposed to toxic substances, harmful radiation or work where there is a health risk from cold, heat, vibration or noise. There are also greater restrictions on the hours that young people can work.

It is important not to forget those on work placement and apprenticeship schemes.

Every year over half a million school students go on work placements and at any one time there are over a quarter of a million people on government-supported apprenticeship schemes. Where children (under-16s) are in the workplace there are strict regulations that include a requirement for the employer to give details of the risk assessments to the child's guardian.

For more information on children's and young people's work rights see the TUC worksmart website at www.worksmart.org.uk

The TUC and Learning and Skills Council have produced separate advice for safety representatives on apprentices. This can be found at www.tuc.org.uk/extras/Apprenticeships.pdf

As a safety representative, you can help protect any young workers in your workplace.

- ◆ You can encourage recruitment of young people into unions whether they are in full-time training or employment.
- ◆ The health and safety of young workers should be a standing and separate agenda item on safety committees, to review health and safety arrangements for young people and monitor performance.
- ◆ Young people should not be required to undertake tasks where their lack of experience may put their own or other people's health and safety at risk. Such tasks should be clearly identified in the health and safety policy.
- ◆ Particular care should be taken when placing young persons in work involving use of dangerous machinery or harmful substances. Young people are often more susceptible to health damage from exposure to toxic substances – although harmful effects may not appear until later in life.
- ◆ There must be proper arrangements for supervision. Work operations requiring constant supervision should be clearly identified – this may mean recruitment of more supervisors.

- ◆ Supervisors and first-line management should always be adequately trained in understanding the risks and control measures connected with the work young people are required to do.
- ◆ Every young worker should be given adequate health and safety induction training to explain the hazards of the job and precautions to be observed. Induction training should emphasise not only the young person's duty to co-operate but also what they are entitled to expect from their employer and others. Safety representatives should be given the opportunity to take part.
- ◆ Health and safety training should be an integral part of job training and work experience programmes. Full information on health and safety matters should be made available. Safety representatives have the legal right to be consulted on the health and safety content of training programmes for young people – they should be involved in the planning of schemes at the earliest possible stage rather than reacting to problems when training programmes have started.





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