

## Children and employment

This fact sheet applies to children and young people who are **under school leaving age**. Young people can leave school on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they are 16. In Scotland, depending on when they become 16, some pupils may be able to leave after Christmas or on 31 May.

If you are over school leaving age, see Further help at the end of this fact sheet for where you can find more information.

There are laws to protect the employment rights of children and young people. The laws concern your health and safety, what work you can do, when you can work and how many hours you can work. These laws are very strict, and an employer can be prosecuted for breaking them.

### What work can you do

No one under the minimum school leaving age can be employed in work other than light work. You are not allowed to do work which is likely to be harmful to your safety, health, development, or work that will affect your attendance at school or participation in work experience. You are not allowed to work:-

- in a factory or in construction work
- in transport
- in a mine
- on a registered merchant ship.

The local authority where you live may also have some extra rules, called **by-laws**, about the employment of children in your area. You should check with your local authority if you want to find out what these are. By-laws authorising children to work in street trading must say which days, which hours, and the places where, they may work.

Employers who want to employ children under school leaving age are required to get a **permit** from their local authority. The permit must be signed by both the employer and one of your parents.

### Children under 14

There are some extra rules about the employment of children under 14. If you are under 14, you are not allowed to work at all except in the following types of work:-

- to take part in sport, advertising, modelling, plays, films, television or other entertainment. The employer must apply for a licence from the local authority
- to do odd jobs for a parent, relative or neighbour
- to do babysitting – see below.

However, children of 13 or above may be able to do some other types of work, depending on the by-laws of the local authority in their area. For example, the by-laws may say that children of 13 and above in your area can do a paper-round, or that you can do light work which is not likely to be harmful to your health, safety or development.

## Hours of work

If you are allowed to work, you must not work:-

- during school hours on any school day
- for more than two hours on any school day or for more than 12 hours in any week in which you are required to go to school
- for more than two hours on a Sunday
- for more than eight hours (five hours if you are under 15) on any day which is not a school day or a Sunday
- before 7am or after 7pm
- for more than 35 hours (25 if you are under the age of 15) in any week in which you are not required to go to school
- for more than four hours in any day without a break of one hour
- at any time, if during the 12 months beginning 1 January, working means that you have not had two uninterrupted weeks of holiday from school.

## Health and safety at work

If you are under school leaving age, you can only be employed if the person you work for (your **employer**) has done an **assessment** of the **possible risks** to your health and safety. They must pay particular attention to your age, lack of experience, and other things that could be a risk to your health and safety.

Your employer must also tell one of your parents the results of the assessment. This must include any risks identified, and any measures put in place to protect your health and safety at work.

These rules do not apply when you are doing occasional work such as odd jobs for someone you know, or babysitting.

## Holidays

If you are under school leaving age, you are not legally entitled to paid holiday from work.

## Pay

If you are under school leaving age, there is no minimum wage that your employer must pay you.

## Babysitting

You can babysit at any age, whether you are paid or not. You are allowed to look after a child of any age. However, if the child you are babysitting is thought to be at risk because it is not being looked after properly, the child's parents could be prosecuted, or action could be taken to put their child into care.

## Further help

### Citizens Advice Bureau

Citizens Advice Bureaux give free, confidential, impartial and independent advice to help you solve problems. To find your nearest CAB, including those that give advice by e-mail, click on [nearest CAB](#), or look under C in your phone book.

### Other fact sheets on Adviceguide which might help

- Young people and employment

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**This fact sheet was last updated on 1 May 2007, and is reviewed regularly. If it is some time since you obtained this fact sheet, please contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau to check if it is still correct. Or visit our website - [www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk) - where you can download an up-to-date copy.**