



Young people

Young people are an important part of any community, and their participation is actively encouraged. Many share close links through their school or a community group such as Scouts or Guides.

Some churches, and other charitable groups, support and develop young people by running regular youth groups or are part of a network youth church with other local churches working together as part of a 'Youth Ministry'. Some will organise exchanges and visits, both nationally and further afield, or involve young people in mentoring or working with children and their peers. Very occasionally, some larger organisations may take on young people as apprentices, for work experience, or as employees.

Whatever the extent, to which young people are involved in your organisation, there may be some steps you will need to take to make sure that they remain safe. In most cases, you will already have the necessary health and safety precautions in place to protect others, so this should be straightforward.

Legal requirements

For our purposes, a **young person** is anyone under 18. A **child** is anyone who has not yet reached the official minimum school leaving age (MSLA). Students reach the MSLA in the school year in which they turn 16.

Under health and safety law, every employer must ensure that all their employees, irrespective of age, are protected from danger. With this in mind, additional consideration will be needed where young persons are employed whether for work, work experience, or as an apprentice.

Here, you will have duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated regulations (e.g. the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations). Broadly, you have a responsibility to ensure that young people employed or working with you are not exposed to risk due to their:

- lack of experience
- being unaware of existing or potential risks
- lack of maturity.

Beyond this, if someone is injured you may need to show that you have met your duty of care. For example, if your youth group is carrying out an activity you have organised, you may need to make sure that it is done safely.

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 protection in relation to the hours they can work. More information can be found at www.gov.uk.

Children below the MSLA must not be employed in industrial workplaces except when on work experience. Children under 13 are generally prohibited from any form of employment.

Safeguarding matters are not covered by health and safety law. Here, you will need to refer to other resources for information and guidance on these matters.

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Hazards to look out for

Typical hazards include the following:

- the layout of the premises which might pose a specific danger to young people (e.g. towers, balconies)
- hazardous substances used on the premises during maintenance or cleaning
- work equipment requiring specific instruction or training
- tasks that require particular knowledge or skills to be done safely (e.g. lifting or moving tables or chairs.)*

Remember that hazards that are obvious to you, may not be to a young person.

*Note: this list is not exhaustive

Making a start

Action	Guidance
<p>1. Identify where any young people work or are involved in volunteering activities at your premises.</p> <p>This should include any future planned activities which may involve them.</p>	<p>Young persons could be employed by you, working on a voluntary basis or as work experience placement. It may be helpful to make a list of these.</p> <p>In some cases, it may be necessary to discuss what the young person will be doing in advance with the organisers (e.g. a school). It may also be appropriate to take account of what they and the parents or carers tell you of the young person's physical and psychological capacity and of any other particular needs (e.g. due to any health conditions or learning difficulties).</p>
<p>2. Check the precautions you have taken are adequate.</p> <p>If they are not, identify any additional ones that are needed and who will be responsible for implementing them.</p>	<p>If you are an employer and have completed formal risk assessments, a simple review of these should help you identify if adequate precautions are in place to protect young persons. If not, you may need to take additional steps to protect them.</p> <p>In most instances, a church or small charity environment is low risk, with everyday risks that will mostly be familiar to any young person. Here, your existing arrangements and precautions used to protect other employees and volunteers should be enough.</p> <p>If you don't currently work with any young people, have not done so in the last few years or are taking on a work experience student for the first time, or one with particular needs, review your risk assessment before they start. This will help you decide if the precautions you already have in place will be adequate.</p>
<p>3. Ensure that young people know how to work safely.</p> <p>Make a note of any information or training that is provided to individuals.</p>	<p>Many young people are likely to be new to your premises and in some cases will be facing unfamiliar risks, from the job they will be doing and from their surroundings. You will need to provide them with adequate instruction, training and supervision to enable them to work without putting themselves and other people at risk.</p>

Precautions you can take

Typical precautions include:

- appointing a person(s) to supervise young workers and monitor their progress
- considering the need for tailored training or closer supervision for some
- considering if the work required of a young person is beyond their physical or psychological capacity
- taking appropriate precautions when exposed to hazardous substances or noise etc.*

*Note: this list is not exhaustive

Action	Guidance
	<p>Again, where you are an employer and have completed formal risk assessments, these should help you decide what is necessary. For example, this may need to cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the specific risks in your premises • the risks from any work to be done • the health and safety precautions to be taken • emergency procedures. <p>It is important that you check young people have understood the instruction and training they have received.</p> <p>In some cases, it might be appropriate to provide supervision for young persons. You may also need to monitor their progress which will help you identify where additional adjustments may be needed.</p>
<p>4. Document your arrangements and responsibilities for ensuring the safety of young persons.</p> <p>Review these where necessary, particularly if you suspect that they are no longer valid.</p> <p>Retain records of the notes you have made in the steps outlined above.</p>	<p>If you have prepared a health and safety policy, record these as part of it.</p>

Want to know more?

Further useful resources are available at www.hse.gov.uk/youngpeople/

Note: if you are in Ireland, Northern Ireland, Jersey, Guernsey or the Isle of Man, then regional variations might apply. In this instance, you should check the guidance provided by the Enforcing Agency for your region. This will be freely available on their website.

Risk advice line

(provided by Ecclesiastical professionals or external specialists)

Phone: **0345 600 7531**

Email: risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com

Risk specialists are on hand to advise you on a range of topics, including:

- property protection, security, business continuity planning
- health and safety, food safety, environmental management
- construction safety, fire safety, occupational health, water safety or asbestos.

Available Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm (excluding public and bank holidays).

For further information speak to your insurance advisor or call us on **0345 60 20 999**

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