



Child Employment

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Properly structured and regulated part-time work can help children's development and preparation for working life, as long as it does not have an adverse impact on their education.

The youngest age that a child can work is 13 years old, although exceptions can occasionally be made for younger children involved in certain theatrical or other performances, or to work on an occasional basis for their parents in light agricultural or horticultural work. Local authority byelaws made under the 1933 Act, and approved by the Secretary of State for Health, may place further restrictions on the hours and conditions of work and the nature of employment.

Employers must inform their LA that they have employed a school-age child. If satisfied with the arrangements, the LA will issue the child with an employment permit but this may be rescinded, or employment in some way restricted, should there be any concern that the child's health or education is suffering.

These regulations apply to all children of compulsory school age. Children are regarded as being of compulsory school age up to the last Friday in June in the academic year of their 16th birthday. Previous rules allowing children to leave school earlier than this, in certain circumstances, have been repealed. It is possible for a child to technically leave school at 15 years old if their birthday is in the summer holiday (July or August).

The Protection of Young People at Work came into force in the UK on 4 August 1998. This stipulates that:

- Children must have a two-week break from any work during the school holidays in each calendar year.
- Local Authorities must have a list of jobs which 13 year olds can do. No 13 year old can work in a job not on the list.

Children may work for:

- A maximum of two hours on schooldays
- A maximum of two hours on Sundays
- A maximum of five hours (13 to 14 year olds) or eight hours (15 to 16 year olds) on Saturdays
- A maximum of 12 hours per week

During school holidays they may work for up to five hours (13 to 14 year olds) or eight hours (15 to 16 year olds) on weekdays subject to a maximum weekly limit of 25 hours (13 to 14 year olds) or 35 hours (15 to 16 year olds).

Children may not work:

- For more than one hour before school
- During school hours
- Before 7:00am or after 7:00pm
- For more than four hours without taking a break of at least one hour
- Without an employment permit issued by the LA
- In any industrial setting, e.g. factory, building site, etc.
- In any occupations prohibited by local bye-laws or other legislation, e.g. pubs, betting shops or in any work that may be harmful to their health, well-being or education

The national minimum wage only applies to people aged 18 years old or over. Employers who contravene the rules face fines of up to £1,000.