

Unions today – your friend at work

At times we all need advice or support in connection with employment.

Everyone has the right to join a union – it costs less than you think and your employer doesn't need to know you are thinking of joining up. The average cost of being in a union is only 92p a week for part-timers and £1.99 for those working full-time.

To find out more about how to join a union and which union is the right one for you, phone the TUC's *Know Your Rights* line on **0870 600 4 882** or visit www.worksmart.org.uk/unionfinder

www.worksmart.org.uk – the one-stop site for everyone at work. This website provides a range of information about working life and your rights at work – whether you are a union member or not. The full text of this leaflet, plus the whole range of rights materials, is on the site – just a click away!

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Trades Union Congress

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www.tuc.org.uk

Thanks to Europe and action by the British government, rights for young people at work have just got better. This leaflet explains how.

workSMART

Know
Your
Rights

www.worksmart.org.uk

Young people at work



This leaflet explains how you may benefit from:

- protection against working long hours;
- the right to better rest breaks than your older colleagues;
- a rest period every working day;
- time off every week; and
- the minimum wage.

Are you a young worker?

If you are aged 16 or 17 and in work then special rules about working time apply to you.

There are different rules for the minimum wage, which we explain later in this leaflet.

Many other rights at work do not depend on your age. They are the same for everyone. You can find out about these at the TUC website www.worksmart.org.uk or in the TUC leaflet *Your Job and the Law* which you can get from the TUC *Know Your Rights* line **0870 600 4 882**. This leaflet only deals with rights that are different for young people.

Maximum working hours

There are rules to protect you against working too long each week and working at night. Normally you should not work:

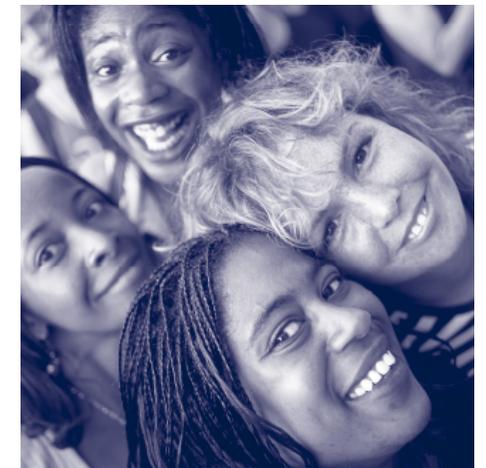
- more than eight hours a day;
- more than 40 hours a week;
- or at night (but see below for more about night work).

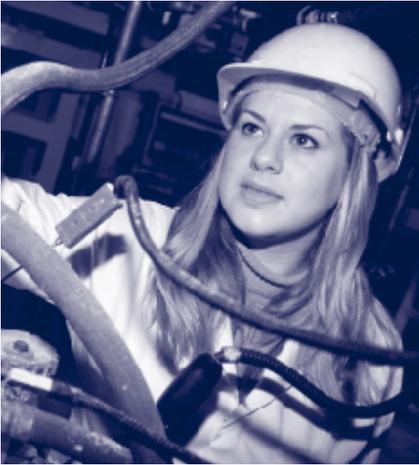
But your employer can ask you to work longer hours if they are needed for what the law calls 'maintaining continuity of service or production', or to respond to a surge in demand.

You can only do these extra hours if all these conditions are met:

- an adult is not available to perform the duties; and
- any training you are doing is not neglected or adversely affected; and
- you must be properly supervised if the work is at night.

Over-18s can agree to opt out of the 48-hour average weekly limit that applies to them by signing away these rights. Under-18s cannot do this. Even if you want to work longer hours, you cannot. Not every job is covered by this protection, though the list of exempted jobs is getting smaller. Members of the armed forces are not covered by these rules; and young seafarers are covered by a separate set of rules (the Seafarers Directive 2002).





Time off

You should get a proper break between stopping and starting work each day and a longer period off every week:

- you should get at least 12 hours of rest in every 24-hour period, and this should be a single 12 hour break;
- you should also get a rest period of at least 48 hours in every seven day period – again this should be a single break.

This two-day rest break per week is twice as long as workers over 18 enjoy.

Again you cannot choose to give these up.

Meal breaks

You should get an uninterrupted break of 30 minutes if you are working for four and a half hours or more. You should be able to take this away from where you work.

Night work

Normally you should not work at night.

For these purposes 'night' starts at 10pm and ends at 6am, though you can still be contracted to work past 10pm providing that you don't then work between 11pm and 7pm.

There are some exceptions, however. Some young people will still be able to work at night, but only as long as the following conditions are met:

- the work is needed 'to maintain continuity of service or production', or to respond to a surge in demand;
- an adult is not available to perform the duties;
- your training is not adversely affected;
- you are properly supervised; and
- you are given compensatory rest.

If all of these conditions apply then you can work throughout the night if:

- you are working in a hospital or somewhere similar; or
- you are working in connection with cultural, artistic, sporting or advertising activities.

In addition you can work up until midnight or from 4am if you work in:

- agriculture;
- a shop;
- a hotel or catering business;
- restaurants and bars;
- a bakery; or
- postal or newspaper deliveries.

The minimum wage

The age limits are different for the minimum wage.

From 1 October 2004 16 and 17-year-olds have a minimum wage of £3 per hour.

The minimum wage for 18 to 21-year-olds is £4.10 per hour.

The 'adult' minimum wage of £4.85 is only paid to those who are 22 or over.



Safety at work



The law says that employers must be extra careful with young workers.

Before taking on a young worker, employers have to assess the risks to your health and the suitability of the proposed work. They should take into account your relative lack of experience in the workplace.

There's a special TUC leaflet about health and safety for young people called *Work Safe* that you can get from the TUC *Know Your Rights* line **0870 600 4 882**.

Contacts

Department of Trade and Industry

Free government literature on the Working Time Directive can be ordered from the Department of Trade and Industry Publications Department, or downloaded from the DTI's employment rights website.

T: 020 7215 6024

www.tiger.gov.uk

Health and Safety Executive

The HSE Infoline or the Environmental Health department of your local council can help with queries on the working week and night work.

T: 08701 545 500 (8am-6pm)

National Minimum Wage Helpline

T: 0845 6000 678

ACAS

ACAS is a public body that promotes good workplace relations. Their national helpline can provide general advice on rights at work for employees and employers.

T: 08457 47 47 47 (9am-4.30pm)

Citizens Advice Bureau

Your local CABx office will be listed in your telephone directory. You can also visit www.citizensadvice.org.uk to find advice and information online.

If you think your problem may have a discrimination aspect then you might find the following helpful:

The Equal Opportunities Commission

T: 08456 015 901

www.eoc.org.uk

Commission for Racial Equality

T: 020 7939 0000

www.cre.gov.uk

Disability Rights Commission

T: 08457 622633

Lesbian and Gay Employment Rights

Helpline between 12 noon and 4pm

T: 020 7704 8066 (women);

020 7704 6066 (men)

www.lager.dircon.co.uk