

# The Health and Safety of Young Persons at Work

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 impose additional requirements for the protection of employees who are under the age of 18 years:

"Every employer shall ensure that young persons employed by him are protected at work from any risks to their health or safety which are a consequence of their lack of experience, or absence of awareness of existing or potential risks or the fact that young persons have not yet fully matured."

The Regulations require employers to assess risks to young people before they start work or undertake work experience. In particular the employer should:

- Take into account their inexperience, lack of risk awareness and immaturity;
- Address specific factors, including:
  - the fitting out and layout of the workplace and the workstation
  - the nature, degree and duration of exposure to physical, biological and chemical agents;
  - the type of work equipment in use and the way in which it is handled;
  - the organisation of processes and activities
  - the provision of safety training
  - the risks from specific processes and work activities listed in the Annex to the Directive.
- Provide information to parents of school age children about risks to their children's health and safety and the appropriate preventive and protective measures in place. This information should be made available before work/work experience begins;
- Determine whether young people should be prohibited from certain work activities.

Prohibition will not be necessary where young persons over the minimum school leaving age are carrying out work which is essential for their training as long as it is supervised by a competent person and risks are reduced to the lowest reasonably practicable level in line with current health and safety legislation.

## What this means for you

If you are planning to employ young trainees or provide work experience for young people then you should re-assess the risks in your workplace in light of the above requirements. In general, if you are complying with existing health and safety legislation then risks to young workers will almost certainly be adequately controlled, but where significant risks remain you must not employ young workers to do the work.

**Child Protection Legislation (Safeguarding) also needs to be considered.**