

Child employment

At what age can a child or young person work?

The general rule is that a young person under school leaving age (16) can get a part-time job from the age of 14. However, they can only be employed in what is considered 'light work'. This means that they cannot do any job that may affect their health and safety or interfere with their education.

Young people over 14 can:

- deliver newspapers and leaflets
- work in a shop, including stacking shelves
- work in an office
- do hairdressing
- work in a café or restaurant, but not in the kitchen
- work in hotels and other places offering accommodation.
- In certain circumstances young persons under the age of 14 can also work. However, this will often depend on the particular by-laws of the Local Authority where they live so you should check the policies on this with your local council.
- Young people can start full-time employment as soon as they leave school, which is on the last Friday in June of the year that they turn 16 years old. Please note that there is now a requirement for young people to continue to participate in education and training up until the age of 18. If a young person starts a full time job at 16 they will still need to complete at least 280 guided learning hours a year in education or training.

How many hours can a young person work?

- The following are the basic rules which govern the working hours of young persons:

During school term-time

	Maximum hours per week	Maximum hours on schooldays or Sundays	Maximum hours on Saturdays
13 - 14 year olds	12	2	5
15 - 16 year olds	12	2	8

During school holidays

	Maximum hours per week	Maximum hours on weekdays or Saturdays	Maximum hours on Sundays
13 - 14 year olds	25	5	2
15 - 16 year olds	35	8	2

Other general rules for 13 - 16 year olds are that:

- they cannot work before 7am and after 7pm;
- they must have a break from work of at least 2 weeks a year; and
- they must have a rest break of 1 hour for every 4 hours worked.

If a young person is over school leaving age but under 18 they must not work more than 8 hours a day or more than 40 hours a week. Usually, they cannot work between 10pm and 6am unless they work in certain professions.