

Working with Young People

**(Apprentices, Work Placement
Learners & Supported Interns)**

Working with Young People

Hiring young people, whether as apprentices or work placement learners, can be a rewarding experience for both the employer and the employee. However, it comes with specific responsibilities and considerations, especially regarding employment law, safeguarding, and professional conduct. This guide provides essential information to ensure that your workplace is compliant with legal requirements and supports young people in their development, helping them to achieve their potential.

The guide also looks to take into consideration the requirements of learners who may have a range of needs and conditions under the four broad areas of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), which are: Communication and Interaction, Cognition and Learning, Social, Emotional, and Mental Health difficulties, and Sensory and/or Physical Needs.

1. Employment Law and Young Workers

When hiring young people, there are several employment laws that you must adhere to. These laws are designed to protect young workers and ensure their safety and fair treatment in the workplace. Supported Internships are not paid but the general employment laws still apply.

Minimum Wage & Employment Terms

- Apprentices must be paid at least the **Apprentice National Minimum Wage** if they are in the first year of their apprenticeship or aged under 19 in year 2. Apprentices aged 19+ who are in the second year of their apprenticeship are entitled to the National Minimum Wage Rate for their age group. Please check the current rates, set by the government.
- **Contract of Employment:** Apprentices must have a written contract of employment which outlines the terms of their employment, including duration, working hours, pay, statutory benefits and company specific policies.
- **Paid leave:** Apprentices are entitled to paid annual leave, statutory sick pay and things such as maternity/paternity pay and leave like any other employee.

Working Hours

- **Under 18s:**
 - Young workers aged 16-17 can work up to 8 hours a day and 40 hours a week.
 - They are prohibited from working late at night (10 pm to 6 am) unless in certain sectors like agriculture or retail.
 - They must have a 12-hour break between shifts and two days off a week.
- **Rest Breaks:** Workers aged under 18 must receive a 30-minute break if their shift exceeds 4.5 hours.
- If the young person has one or more needs in the four areas of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), they may need a different break schedule and this very much depends on the young person and their need.

Health and Safety

- **Risk Assessment:** Employers are required to assess the risks associated with young workers and ensure the work environment is safe. Special attention must be paid to areas such as machinery, hazardous substances, and physical strain.
- **Training:** Young workers must be provided with adequate training on health and safety, and they must be monitored to ensure they understand and follow safety protocols. Learners with SEND needs will need more or adapted training. This is likely to mainly include giving processing time, repetition and chance for hands on practice.
- **Supervision:** Employers must ensure appropriate supervision and mentoring, especially when young workers are performing tasks they are not experienced in (they may require more supervision than experienced adults). Learners with SEND needs may require additional supervision (this could be where Access to Work applies).

2. Safeguarding Requirements

Protecting young people in the workplace is critical. Employers must take steps to ensure that the work environment is safe, supportive, and free from harm. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Safeguarding Policies

- **Risk of Abuse or Exploitation:** Employers must have clear policies to protect young workers from any form of abuse or exploitation, including inappropriate relationships or bullying.
- **Reporting Mechanisms:** Employers should have a clear and accessible system for reporting concerns about safeguarding issues. Ensure that young people are aware of how to report any issues confidentially. Employers should follow guidance from Yeovil College on reporting concerns about the young people they are working with – see Employer’s Guide to Safeguarding & Prevent. To report immediate safeguarding concerns, call 07973 898849 (safeguarding line) during college opening hours.
- **Support & Signposting:** If support or referral to external agencies is required, the college team can assist with ensuring young people get the right support. All our learners have access to HealthAssured (Wisdom), who provide students with 24-hour, 365 days a year confidential support, free phone 0800 028 3766 or download the ‘Wisdom’ app – access code MHA078286.
- **Workplace Environment:** The work environment must be free of harassment, bullying, or any inappropriate behaviour. Employers should promote respectful and professional conduct and ensure young people have a supportive and safe working environment.
- Learners with SEND, with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), that are disadvantaged, that have been looked after or previously looked after; are statistically more likely to be at risk of abuse or exploitation. With this in mind, employers will need to understand the young person’s vulnerabilities and usual behaviours so that they are aware of any changes/signs of potential exploitation or abuse.

3. Professional Behaviour and Conduct

Creating a professional atmosphere and setting clear expectations around workplace behaviour is key to ensuring young people develop good workplace habits.

Workplace Etiquette and Expectations

- **Punctuality and Timekeeping:** Be clear about your expectations regarding punctuality, attendance, and how to handle absences. It is important to demonstrate the importance of reliability in the workplace.
- **Communication:** Encourage open and respectful communication. Young people may need guidance on how to interact with colleagues and managers, as well as on how to handle feedback or conflicts.
- **Setting boundaries & Healthy Relationships:** Ensuring your whole team understand acceptable behaviours in the workplace and how to keep interactions respectful and professional is essential. Communicating effectively and assertively is important and young people may need encouragement to get this right. Healthy workplace relationships are built on mutual respect, trust, clear communication and appropriate boundaries. Encouraging open dialogue ensures that young people feel comfortable raising concerns.
- Whilst clear expectations are key for all learners, some learners with SEND needs may need adaptations and support in order to be able to successfully meet those expectations in a way that is equitable with everyone else.

Banter and Workplace Culture

Young people and learners with one or more needs in the four areas of SEND can be quite vulnerable and may not understand or be able to interpret social rules the same way as their peers. Some learners may understand comments literally. This can lead to follow up actions being taken that were not intended or causing unintended consequences.

- **Inappropriate Banter:** While light-hearted humour can promote a friendly work environment, employers must be vigilant about any "banter" that crosses the line into bullying or harassment. The workplace should be inclusive and free from jokes or comments that target individuals based on their age, gender, ethnicity, disability, or other protected characteristics. Remember, what one person finds funny is offensive to another!

- **Clear Guidelines:** Make it clear that while some humour is acceptable, any behaviour that is offensive, discriminatory, or undermines others' dignity will not be tolerated. Train staff on maintaining a respectful work environment, ensuring that learners can access these guidelines in an accessible way that meets their individual needs.
- **Role Modelling:** As an employer or manager, set an example by clearly modelling appropriate behaviour. Encourage a positive, supportive, and inclusive workplace culture.

4. Training, Development, and Support

Offering training and support is essential for young workers to feel empowered and to develop their skills and confidence in the workplace.

Structured Learning and Development

- **Mentorship:** Provide young people with a mentor or supervisor to help guide them through the workplace culture and tasks. This mentor should be someone who models positive work behaviours and provides constructive feedback. Regular check-ins and supervision are crucial to ensure that young people are comfortable and well-supported in their roles. This mentor can gain an understanding about the learner's needs through meeting with a Yeovil College Assessor prior and during the employment/placement. Learners will all benefit from having a mentor as their 'go to' person to build a consistent relationship which also instils a sense of safety and framework for progress and independence.
- **Skills Development:** Young people in apprenticeships or work placements should have the opportunity to learn relevant skills for their chosen field. Support them in their personal and professional development within the workplace, in line with their job role and responsibilities. Learners having processing time and being able to learn by observing and having opportunities to practice the skills needed to be successful is key.
- **Feedback and Reviews:** Regular reviews of performance should be conducted, providing constructive feedback on areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. Encourage an open dialogue for questions and concerns. Also encourage feedback from the young person – they bring unique perspective and innovative ideas to situations. For learners that struggle with Social, Emotional, Mental Health needs (SEMH) receiving feedback in a way that works for them is vital to help them thrive and develop confidence and perseverance.

Promoting Confidence

- **Inclusion:** Create an inclusive workplace where young people feel they belong and have opportunities to contribute. This means taking learners at their individual circumstances and needs and making adaptations in order to achieve equity with their peers. This can boost their confidence, engagement and outcomes in learning and the workplace.
- **Workplace Wellbeing:** Ensure there are resources available for mental health and wellbeing support. Young people may be adjusting to the workplace environment, and having someone to speak to is crucial.

5. Key Considerations for Employers

When employing young people, there are a few additional factors that employers should consider:

Equal Treatment

- Employers must ensure that no one is subjected to unlawful treatment based on characteristics such as age, disability, sex, gender identity, race, or religion. Ensure that young people are treated fairly and equally, with no bias due to their individualism and needs. Avoid any stereotyping or assumptions based on their youth.
- Be considerate of differences in views, culture and opinions. Not everyone is the same, but that's what makes the world so interesting!
- Be respectful of pronouns and encourage teams to share pronouns, so that misgendering is reduced. Train teams on inclusive language and the importance of respecting pronouns.

Workplace Integration

- Support young people in integrating into the workplace by involving them in team activities, encouraging networking, and fostering a team-oriented atmosphere. Some learners may find this a challenge due to factors such as social anxiety, sensory barriers with busy and noisy places, struggling with social rules and interactions.

Conclusion

| Four Areas of SEND | Description |
|--|---|
| Cognition and Learning (Learning and Work) | Young people with learning needs may learn at a slower pace than their peers and may have difficulty with literacy and numeracy skills and processing new concepts. |
| Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties (Being Healthy) | Young people may experience a wide range of social and emotional difficulties which manifest themselves in many ways. Needs in this area can affect the way learners act, react, attend and their confidence in relation to tasks in learning and work. |
| Communication and Interaction Needs (Community Friends and Relationships) | Young people with speech, language, and communication needs (SLCN) have difficulty in communicating with others. This may be because they have difficulty saying what they want to, understanding what is being said to them, or they do not understand or struggle to use social rules of communication. Needs in this area may affect learners' ability to express themselves, understand verbal information and understand and follow social rules, or even build and maintain appropriate relationships in life and work. |
| Sensory and/or Physical Needs and Independence | <p>Sensory: Needs in this area may affect learners' ability to cope with certain environments, noise levels and even to just concentrate.</p> <p>Physical: Young people with a physical disability may require additional ongoing support and equipment to access all the opportunities available to their peers.</p> |

Providing equal opportunities to young people is essential to their development but also creates a highly skilled future workforce. Hopefully this guide helps to better understand your responsibilities as an employer of young people and how you can help create the best work environment for them. For any questions or concerns, please contact the team – we are more than happy to help advise.

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| For Apprenticeship Enquiries | 01935 845392 apprenticeships@yeovil.ac.uk |
| For Careers, Work Experience & Industry Placement Enquiries | careershub@yeovil.ac.uk |
| For All Other Enquiries | 01935 423921 iZone@yeovil.ac.uk |

Useful Safeguarding Contacts and SEND Links:

Safeguarding Contacts:

Yeovil College Duty Safeguarding Officer: 07973 898849

Anti-terrorist Hotline: 0800 789 321

Somerset Direct: 0300 123 2224

Dorset Direct: 01305 228866

Avon and Somerset Prevent referrals: channelsw@avonandsomerset.pnn.police.uk

Dorset Prevent referrals: sru@dorset.pnn.police.uk

Devon and Cornwall Prevent referrals: prevent@devonandcornwall.pnn.police.uk

Alcohol Concern: 0300 123 1110 [Alcohol Change UK charity: Alcohol harms. Time for change. | Alcohol Change UK](#)

Equality and Human Rights Commission: 0808 800 0082 [Equalityhumanrights.com](https://equalityhumanrights.com)

Other Sources for Support and Guidance: [Safeguarding and social care for children - GOV.UK](#)

SEND Links:

[Disability Rights UK](#)

[Disability Law Service](#)

[Equality Advisory& Support Service](#)

[British Dyslexia Association](#)

[National Autistic Society](#)

[Neurodiversity UK](#)

[ADHD Foundation](#)



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