



Health and safety of children and young people in catering

Catering Information Sheet No 21

Introduction

This information sheet outlines health and safety law specifically covering children and young people and gives guidance on how to apply it.

It has been prepared because young people are more at risk of injury. There are many young people working in the catering industry, often on a casual or temporary basis or on work experience schemes.

What are my legal duties as an employer?

You must assess and reduce risks, so far as is reasonably practicable, for all employees (whatever their age) and tell them what the risks are and what steps are being taken to control them. You must consult employees on health and safety matters, either directly or through elected safety representatives.

Additional laws apply to young people below the age of 18. You must:

- assess risks to young people before they start work;
- take into account their inexperience, lack of awareness of risks and immaturity;
- provide information to parents or guardians of school-age children about risks and control issues before they start work; and
- decide whether to prohibit young people altogether from certain work activities.

You do not need to repeat this every time a young person starts work but you should always review the risk assessment if there are any changes to the work.

Other factors to consider are lack of physical strength, possible smaller size, any health issues (for example asthma) and any physical or learning disabilities.

You also need to consider suitable induction training, supervision by a competent person and clear instructions on tasks you have decided young people must not do.

The regulations do not apply to young people working on occasional and short-term work that is not harmful in firms owned by their family.

How do I apply this in practice?

Table 1 shows one possible approach to dealing with a range of tasks common in catering. It gives a guide to the level of detail needed. It will need to be adapted to the particular risks young people are exposed to in your business. It includes a number of situations where it was decided children must not do tasks and other young people can only do them after training or under proper supervision.

Some larger businesses may use lift trucks. Drivers must be at least 18, fully trained or supervised and children must never drive them.

Work involving a risk of electric shock should only be carried out by young people if they are fully trained or under the supervision of a competent, qualified person.

Other areas where young people may need particular training and supervision include work with flammable liquids, gas cylinders or fireworks.

Any special precautions concerning the presence of asbestos in the workplace should also be brought to the attention of young people.

Employment of children

Additional legal requirements apply when employing children:

- You should therefore always check with your local authority before employing children below minimum school leaving age.
- A child is someone below the minimum school leaving age (around 16, depending on their birthday and its relation to the date school term ends).
- Children below the minimum school leaving age must not be employed in industrial undertakings, such as factories or construction sites, except when on work experience programmes approved by local education authorities.
- The minimum age for other employment is 14 years, but local authorities have the power to make bye-laws restricting work in certain types of premises to those above the minimum school leaving age. These bye-laws may also contain a list of light work which children aged between 13 years and the minimum school leaving age can do in non-industrial premises.

Table 1 Example of risk assessment and control measures

Young person's task	Main risks	Control measures
Serving food and drink	Slips, trips, manual handling	<p data-bbox="938 344 1458 533">Company induction training covers safe practice in relation to each of these tasks. Specifically, it covers safe handling and use of knives, use of appropriate protective equipment when using the dishwasher, cleaning floors and disposing of refuse.</p> <p data-bbox="938 667 1481 757">Instruction on calming customers down and seeking managerial assistance in the case of disputes.</p>
Making sandwiches	Use of knives	
Use of dishwasher	Manual handling and use of cleaning materials	
Cleaning floors	Manual handling and use of cleaning materials	
Refuse disposal	Cuts from broken glass, manual handling	
Cash handling	Aggressive customers	
Use/cleaning of food-slicers, mixers, food-processors, potato-chippers	Injury to hands from moving machinery parts	
Handling of corrosive cleaning materials, including oven- and beerline-cleaner	Chemical burns to skin or eyes	
Work at height	Injury from falls	
Use of waste compactor	Injury from contact with moving machinery	
Cleaning, draining and use of fat fryers	Fire and burns from hot oil	
De-boning of meat	Severe cut or stab from knife	

- Local authority bye-laws can restrict the type of work, the start and finish times, and the maximum number of hours.
- Your local authority will require you to obtain parental consent before they will issue a child with an employment permit.
- Children under 13 are generally prohibited from employment.

What information must I provide to parents or guardians of children?

The key findings of the risk assessment and necessary controls must be covered. The information must be clear and relevant.

The information need not be in writing, although this will be the easiest way and will remove any doubt that you have communicated properly with the parents. For this information to serve any useful purpose, you must give it to parents or guardians before a child starts work.

Model letter to parents

Some employers have found a standard letter useful. The following text may be used as a model:

'I write concerning the employment of (child's name). It is my responsibility to ensure his/her health and safety while working.

I am required by regulations to give you, as parent/guardian, information on the risk assessment and control measures relevant to the work. I enclose a copy for your information.

If you want to discuss this or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.'

Supervision and induction

When a young person starts work they are likely to need extra supervision. You must ensure that they know who the person responsible for them is and that they are given the appropriate information and training on any hazards, risks, and precautions they may have to take. You must ensure that they understand what they need to do for their own and other's health and safety.

Some young people may lack the confidence to voice their concerns so it is important that they are aware of procedures for doing so. If there is a safety representative, you should tell them who it is.

Working times

The Working Time Regulations 1998 apply to all workers but there are some specific provisions that apply to

young workers. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has published guidance on the Regulations (see 'Further reading').

Further reading

Young people at work: A guide for employers HSG165 (Second edition) HSE Books 2000 ISBN 0 7176 18897

Managing health and safety on work experience: A guide for organisers HSG199 HSE Books 2000 ISBN 0 7176 1742 4

Management of health and safety at work. Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. Approved Code of Practice L21 (Second edition) HSE Books 2000 ISBN 0 7176 2488 9

Five steps to risk assessment Leaflet INDG163(rev1) HSE Books 1998 (single copy free or priced packs of 10 ISBN 0 7176 1565 0)

A short guide to the Working Time Regulations URN 00/63/2DTI (Available free from the DTI Orderline Tel: 0845 6000 925 or the DTI website: www.dti.gov.uk/er/regs.htm)

Consulting employees on health and safety Leaflet INDG232 HSE Books 1996 (single copy free or priced packs of 10 ISBN 0 7176 1615 0)

This is the latest in a series of Catering Information Sheets available from HSE Books; the other sheets in the current series are listed below.

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| CAIS2 | <i>Priorities for health and safety in catering activities</i> |
| CAIS3 | <i>Precautions at manually ignited gas-fired catering equipment</i> |
| CAIS4 | <i>Managing health and safety pays in the catering industry</i> |
| CAIS5 | <i>Health and safety training pays in the catering industry: Guidance for owners and managers</i> |
| CAIS6 | <i>Slips and trips: Summary guidance for the catering industry</i> |
| CAIS7 | <i>An index of health and safety guidance for the catering industry</i> |
| CAIS8 | <i>Managing the health and safety of catering equipment and workplaces</i> |
| CAIS9 | <i>Planning for health and safety when selecting and using catering equipment and workplaces</i> |

- CAIS10 *Ventilation of kitchens in catering establishments*
- CAIS11 *The main health and safety law applicable to catering*
- CAIS12 *Maintenance priorities in catering*
- CAIS13 *Manual handling in the catering industry*
- CAIS16 *Safety signs in the catering industry*
- CAIS17 *Safety during emptying and cleaning of fryers*
- CAIS18 *Reporting accidents in the catering industry*
- CAIS19 *Health and safety of new and expectant mothers in the catering industry*
- CAIS20 *Health and safety for waiting staff*

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the references listed in this publication, their future availability cannot be guaranteed.

Further information

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This leaflet contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.

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