



# Employing Workers Under 18 Years of Age in Roofing

## Introduction

The roofing industry needs new recruits from all sectors of society, to maintain a workforce capable of delivering the future construction needs of the UK. This will require the contracting supply chain to work together to attract, train, and retain more young people in the industry, which in turn will create a more diverse roofing workforce.

## Young people working on construction sites

A 'young person' is anyone under the age of 18 whereas an inexperienced worker can be of any age, but have little or limited experience of working on a construction site. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work regulations, employers have a responsibility to ensure that young people employed by them are not exposed to risks due to their lack of experience or maturity, as they will be unaware of hazards in the workplace.

## Managing young people on construction sites

An employer taking on a young person or an inexperienced operative will need to ensure that there is a rigorous process in place to supervise the operative(s) to ensure that they comply with their health and safety obligations and the requirements of the company's insurance policy.

## Supervising young people and inexperienced workers

Workplace Supervisors play a crucial role in managing young people and inexperienced workers on site, and particularly in ensuring the success of an apprenticeship or traineeship programme. Their key role in supporting the person is to:

- Meet them on their first working day and show them around the site, ensuring they are fully inducted and equipped with the correct Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) where relevant.
- Provide a clear explanation of what is expected in terms of conduct and performance in relation to the role they are doing.
- Outline the correct procedures for reporting workplace issues such as absence, health and safety concerns and grievances.
- If undertaking work tasks on a construction site; ensure that a suitable risk assessment has been carried out.
- Act as a role model to the person and ensure they lead by example at all times.
- Give guidance and support, as well as clear and concise instructions on work tasks.

- Be fully aware of the content of the apprenticeship or training the young person is undertaking, recognising opportunities for them to gain relevant experience.
- Monitor and keep records of progress liaising with the training provider and other relevant parties where required.

## Health and Safety

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, an employer has a responsibility to ensure that young and inexperienced people employed by them are not exposed to risk due to their lack of experience, being unaware of existing or potential risks and/or lack of maturity.

In particular, employers need to consider whether the work the young and inexperienced person will do:

- Is beyond their physical or psychological capacity?
- Involves harmful exposure to toxic substances?  
(*Consideration should be given to exposure levels and ensuring legal limits are met.*)
- Involves harmful exposure to radiation?
- Involves risk of accidents that cannot reasonably be recognised or avoided by young people or inexperienced workers due to their insufficient attention to safety or lack of experience or training?
- Has a risk to health from extreme cold, heat, noise or vibration?

Tasks involving these risks can be carried out by young people or inexperienced workers provided they are properly supervised, and risks are reduced to the lowest level. In addition, employers are advised to adequately control any significant risks by:

- Explaining the risks during induction, checking that the person understands what they have been told and knows how to raise health and safety concerns.
- Ensuring checks are appropriate for the environment the person will be working in and that reasonable adjustments have been made which reflect their ability, age and maturity.
- Continually reinforcing the risks and safe working methods.

### Hours of work

The Working Time Regulations came into force to protect young people at work. The Regulations require that young workers aged between 15 - 18 are not employed for more than eight hours a day or for more than 40 hours a week, including overtime hours.

### Rest breaks

- **Daily rest periods**—Young people are entitled to a daily rest period of at least twelve consecutive hours in each 24-hour period during which they are at work. This may be interrupted in situations where the work activities are split up over the day or are of short duration.
- **Weekly rest periods**—Young people are entitled to a weekly rest period of at least 48 hours in each seven-day period.

- **Breaks in the day**—Young people are entitled to a rest break if their working time is more than four and a half hours. The rest break should be at least 30 minutes, consecutive if possible.

### Insurance:

Employers are required to have Employers' Liability Insurance or Contractors' All Risk Insurance for people they employ under a contract of service (*including work experience*) or apprenticeship. Employers should check the terms and conditions of their insurance to ensure that they are covered for any operatives or trainees that are working on their sites that are under the age of 18.

Employers should also inform their insurer if a young or inexperienced person is working on-site and provide them with a copy of any specific risk assessment in relation to their role.

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**NFRC**  
020 7638 7663  
info@nfrc.co.uk

www.nfrc.co.uk  
@TheNFRC

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