



YOUR RIGHTS AT WORK



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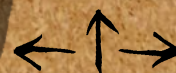
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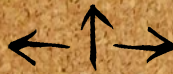
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Introduction



Congress Youth is a group of young workers and trade union members committed to supporting young people in the workplace. We have compiled this information to help you and other young workers understand your rights in the workplace and where to find more information.

If you work in Northern Ireland, regardless of age or nationality, you are entitled to rights and dignity at work, including the right to join a trade union.

Many young workers are unaware of their workplace rights, which can lead them to accept poor working conditions and have low expectations of their work environment.

We hope that the information in this guide will help you to evaluate your workplace experiences and take action to improve them.

Click here
for more info ↓

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BETTER IN A TRADE UNION



Are you working now or planning to work in the future? Are you working and studying at the same time? Are you working part-time, casually or full-time?

No matter where you work or what you do, as a worker, you have rights.

All workers have employment rights, including students and young workers, with entitlements such as an hourly minimum wage rate, a statement of employment conditions, breaks during work and rest periods, paid holidays, and don't forget all workers are entitled to join a trade union and become a member.

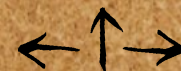


Please remember:

- You have a legal right to join a trade union and you are under no obligation to inform your employer of this.
- It is illegal for your employer to disadvantage, discriminate against, harass or dismiss you for being a trade union member.

Unions make sure working people get a voice at work. Joining a union can help you secure fair wages and respectful treatment at work. If your employer recognises your union, you'll have more options for addressing issues. Even if there isn't a recognised union at your workplace, joining one is still beneficial for valuable advice and support.

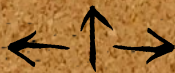
If you're interested in joining a trade union, we'll help you take the next steps. Let us know what sector you work in and we will put you in touch with the best union for you, your workplace and your colleagues. It's a great way to make a difference in your own life and the lives of others. You can also browse our directory of unions and what industries they represent here.



Union Vs Non-Union

- Rely on individual and union strength and support.
- Rules and conditions are the basis of negotiations between the union and the employer.
- Workplace procedures, negotiated with the union, are put in place to ensure rules are applied fairly and equally.
- Unions and Employers negotiate pay and benefits and conditions for all workers.
- Workers have more protection through representation, support, advice and action.

- Can only rely on individual strength and support.
- The employer makes all the rules and imposes changes without consultation.
- The employers enforce rules and changes as they see fit.
- The employers decides on the pay, benefits and conditions that will apply in the workplace.
- Workers do not have access to representation within their workplace.



**BETTER
IN A TRADE
UNION**

Employment Contract

The employment contract is made as soon as you accept a job offer. If you start work it will show that you accepted the job on the terms offered by the employer.

Your employment contract doesn't have to be in writing, but you're entitled to a written statement of the main terms within two months of starting work.

Written Statement of Employment Particulars

As an employee you have a right to a written statement of employment particulars within 2 months of your start date. This will outline the main terms of your employment, including the job description, pay, hours of work and any disciplinary or grievance procedures your employer has.

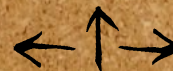
Written statements of employment particulars cannot reduce your legal minimum rights but can enhance them.

Working Hours

The Working Time Regulations NI governs the hours most workers can work and sets limits on an average working week, statutory entitlement to paid leave, entitlement to rest breaks, annual leave and limits on the normal hours of night work.

A limit of 48 hours (averaged over a period of 17 weeks) can be worked, although you can choose to work longer by opting out. The opt-out must be with the agreement of both you and the employer and must be in writing.

If you are under 18, you can't work more than 8 hours per day or 40 hours a week.



Night work

The night time working period is between 11pm and 6am. You are a night worker if you usually work 3 hours per day during this period. As a night worker, you should not work more than an average of eight hours in each 24-hour period- excluding overtime. You cannot opt out of this night working limit.

If you are under 18, you can't work between 10pm to 6am. However, there are a few exceptions if you work in:

- Hospitals
- Agriculture
- Retail
- Hotels or Catering
- Post or Newspaper delivery
- Cultural, Sporting, Artistic or Advertising activities

But this is only if:

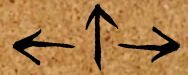
- There are no adult workers available to do the work.
- Working those hours will not have a negative effect on your education or training.
- You are allowed to take a rest period the same length as the time you worked later in the day.



Weekly Rest

All adult workers are entitled to one day off a week. Days off can be averaged over a two-week period, meaning you are entitled to two days off a fortnight.

If you are under 18 you must take two days off each week. This cannot be averaged over a two-week period meaning you can't work an extra day one week and take more days off the following one. These two days rest should also be taken together with no working in between them.



Breaks

All adult workers have the right to a 20 minute break after 6 hours of work

If you are under the age of 18, you are entitled to a 30 minute break after 4.5 hours of work.



Pay

All workers from [school leaving age](#) upwards must be paid at least the [National Minimum Wage](#) (NMW).

As of April 2025 this is:

- Under 18 and apprentices*:
£7.55 per hour
- 18 – 20 years of age:
£10.00 per hour
- 21 and over:
£12.21 per hour

**Apprentices: If you are 19 or over and have completed the first year of your apprenticeship you are entitled to be paid at least the minimum wage for your age.*

Holiday entitlement

There is a minimum right to paid holiday, but your employer may offer more than this. The main things you should know about holiday rights are:

- You are entitled to a minimum of 5.6 weeks paid annual leave (28 days for someone working five days a week). If you work part time, you have the right to a proportion of this based on the hours you work.

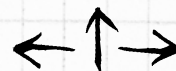
- Bank and public holidays can be included in your minimum entitlement
- Your employer can control when you take your holidays.
- You can start building up holiday entitlement as soon as you start work.
- You get paid your normal pay for your holiday.
- If you work irregular hours or part of the year, you will accrue holiday pay as you work, up to a maximum of 28 days per year.

Sick Pay

If you are off work sick, you have a right to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), if you:

- Have been off sick for more than 3 days in a row (including non-working days)
- Earn at least £123 a week (before tax).
- Have notified your employer of your sickness.

As of April 2025, SSP is £116.75 per week.



Disciplinary and Grievance

Your employer must put their disciplinary and grievance procedures in writing and make it easily available to all staff. It should include the rules, what performance and behaviour might lead to disciplinary action, and what action your employer might take.

By law, there are certain minimum steps that must be included in a disciplinary procedure - these are known as the 'statutory minimum procedures'. Your employer's disciplinary procedure should include the following steps:

- A letter setting out the reason why they are considering disciplinary action.
- A meeting to discuss the issue. (You have the right to take a work colleague or a trade union representative to this meeting)
- A disciplinary decision.
- A chance to appeal this decision.

If your employer dismisses you without following this process, you can make an unfair dismissal claim. You normally need at least a year's service before you can make a claim for [unfair dismissal](#).

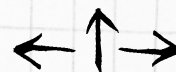
A grievance is a complaint you make about somebody or something at work, for example bullying, harassment, discrimination, poor working conditions.

[The Labour Relations Agency \(LRA\) Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance](#)

procedures sets out principles that you and your employer should follow to achieve a reasonable standard when handling grievances.

To comply with the Code, your employer's grievance procedure must include the following steps:

- Writing a letter to your employer setting out the details of your grievance.
- A meeting with your employer to discuss the issue.
- The ability to appeal your employer's decision.



Dismissal

Dismissal is when your employer ends your employment. The employer must use a fair and reasonable procedure to decide whether to dismiss someone. The employer must show they have:

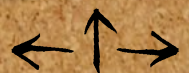
- A valid reason that they can justify.
- Acted reasonably in the circumstances

Your employer normally must give you at least the statutory minimum period of notice, which depends on how long you've worked for them:

- One week if you've been continuously employed for between one month and two years.
- One week for each complete year (up to a maximum of 12) if you've been continuously employed for two or more years.

These rights also apply to apprentices, who are normally on fixed-term contracts. If you stay with your employer after finishing your apprenticeship, your time as an apprenticeship will count when working out your statutory notice period.

If you are employed on fixed term contract (not a permanent employee) the contract will automatically end without notice at their end date.



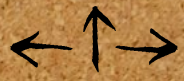
Health & Safety

All employers have a duty to provide a safe workplace. By law, an employer must do all they reasonably can to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of all employees.

Your employer must provide:

- A safe place of work
- Safe plant and equipment
- Safe systems of work
- Competent and trained workers





Equality

You cannot be treated unfairly or discriminated against in the workplace because of age, disability, race, marital status, religious beliefs, pregnancy, maternity, political opinion, gender or sexual orientation.

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requires employers to make Reasonable Adjustments to ensure a worker with a disability is not disadvantaged at work.

Employers are legally responsible for preventing harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace and must ensure that any complaints are taken seriously.

If you work part-time, you cannot be treated differently to someone who works full time simply based on the hours that you work.



Further information

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Northern Ireland Committee



Neurodiversity Guide

When your Home
is your Workplace

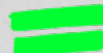
A Remote Worker's Guide to Employment Rights



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ICTU **LEARNING HUB** 

**BETTER IN A
TRADE UNION**



Eliminating
Sexual Harassment
from the Modern
Workplace

Guidance for employers,
trade unions and employees from the
Labour Relations Agency (LRA) and
Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)



**Labour
Relations
agency**

improving employment relations

**nus
usi**
Northern Ireland

Equality Commission

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

