

acas working
for everyone

Guidance

Employing younger workers

March 2016



About Acas – What we do

Acas provides information, advice, training, conciliation and other services for employers and employees to help prevent or resolve workplace problems. Go to www.acas.org.uk for more details.

'Must' and 'should'

Throughout the guide, a legal requirement is indicated by the word 'must' - for example, a younger worker aged 17 or under must be given 2 days off per week.

The word 'should' indicates what Acas considers to be good employment practice.

March 2016

Information in this guide has been revised up to the date of publishing. For more information, go to the Acas website at www.acas.org.uk. Legal information is provided for guidance only and should not be regarded as an authoritative statement of the law, which can only be made by reference to the particular circumstances which apply. It may, therefore, be wise to seek legal advice.

Contents

About this guide	4
What is a younger worker?	4
Step 1: Recruiting a younger worker	5
How best to recruit a younger worker.....	5
Considerations when recruiting an apprentice.....	7
Step 2: Starting to employ a younger worker	8
Before the younger worker starts.....	8
Managing workplace expectations	9
What are the younger worker’s responsibilities?.....	9
Considering the workplace culture	10
Providing an effective induction	11
Step 3: The rights of a younger worker	13
Employment Status.....	13
Restrictions on offering full-time employment.....	14
National minimum wage	14
Rest periods.....	15
Night-time working	15
Health and safety	16
Equality	16
Step 4: Supporting a younger worker	17
Line managers.....	17
Mentors	18
Buddies	19
Working with trade unions	20
Training and development.....	20
Step 5: Retaining younger workers	21
The benefits to retaining younger workers	21
Why do younger workers leave?	21
Holding exit interviews	23
Further information	25

About this guide

Getting the next generation of workers into the workplace, trained and prepared for the full demands of the job is important for many organisations. Younger workers can provide new ideas and a different perspective on issues facing an organisation. They may also help an employer gain a greater insight into a new customer market.

Younger workers often come into the workplace straight from education and/or without any work experience. This can be a big change, particularly if it is from a school environment where they have had many years of being told what to do by their teachers and parents. They may therefore require extra support and a more flexible management approach at the beginning of their employment while they become accustomed to the workplace environment. However, if they are managed and supported in the right way, a younger worker can become a skilled and valued member of the team.

This guide goes through the steps an employer, a line manager and anyone in a supporting role should consider when employing a younger worker. **While the guidance may contain useful considerations when handling the employment of any member of staff, it is particularly relevant to a younger worker with little experience of a working environment.**

A younger worker may also find the guide useful in understanding their rights and what their employer might reasonably expect from them.

What is a younger worker?

When people think of a younger worker they will often imagine somebody fresh out of school. While this can certainly be true, due to a lot of young people continuing into further education and the issue of youth unemployment, many organisations have found it useful to classify a younger worker as someone:

- entering employment for the first time, or
- entering their chosen profession/career for the first time

Typically this means a younger worker may be anyone up to the age of 24 years old. However, some employers might find it advantageous to extend the age range beyond this when identifying who might benefit from a 'new to work' induction.

For example...

The chief executive of an architecture firm is aware that most of the individuals they employ need a degree qualification that takes several years of full time study to attain.

She decides that everyone they employ straight from university may be considered as a younger worker. This means they will go through the organisation's 'new to work' induction programme, which is tailored to employees with little employment experience.

Employers must be aware that workers under the age of 18 are subject to additional legal restrictions – this is covered in more detail in [Step 3](#).

Step 1: Recruiting a younger worker

How best to recruit a younger worker

As younger people enter the employment market, employers should consider their existing recruitment approaches to see if they are attracting applicants from a diverse age range, including younger generations. More **traditional methods of recruitment** (such as job adverts in the local papers) may not always be the most appropriate media if the aim is to appeal to younger candidates. An employer should use a range of approaches when advertising a role to attract a variety of candidates.

Social media (such as popular networking or video-sharing sites) can offer employers an inexpensive way to advertise vacancies to a wider and more diverse group of potential candidates. These advertisements are often shared across networks, opening it up to a much larger audience than an employer might be able to reach with more traditional methods. It is particularly likely to encourage the recruitment of younger workers, who are more likely to use social media, and use it frequently.

For example...

Lukas doesn't have much money to advertise a new part-time position in his small business. He has started to use social media to publicise things that his company is doing and decides to advertise the vacancy this way too.

He is pleasantly surprised to see people sharing the advertisement and finds that a number of the better applicants he interviews found out about the job this way.

Employing younger workers

Online job-boards/employment websites offer another way to advertise vacancies to a wide audience. Younger workers often use the internet to search for vacancies. Some websites have vacancies covering a wide range of jobs, while others can be sector specific.

Use the organisation's own website to advertise any vacancies. Advertising the vacancy on the organisation's own website provides an employer with an opportunity to promote the organisation and highlight the benefits and rewards of working for them.

Jobcentreplus can be a valuable source of job listings and support for younger workers. An employer can advertise their vacancies on their online 'Universal Job match' at www.gov.uk/jobsearch. The vacancies also go on display at local Jobcentreplus offices.

Recruitment agencies, especially where there is a need for particularly fast recruitment, may be preferable to an employer recruiting staff directly. Many younger workers may also be interested in agency work because of the flexibility they feel this offers. Recruitment agencies that are members of a trade association are subject to a code of practice and can provide effective recruitment.

Local schools, colleges and universities often have careers advisers and host jobs fairs. This can be useful when seeking particular skills or highlighting opportunities for trainees, apprenticeships or work experience. Many universities also include internships or work place projects as part of an individual's study. This can offer an employer a good opportunity to get younger workers into their workplace and build links that may lead to employment after graduation.

Using word-of-mouth

Advertising vacancies through the word-of-mouth of existing employees and their social networks can also be useful, but only if it is handled carefully and in conjunction with other methods. Job details should be available to interested applicants and shared through a range of formal recruitment routes.

Advertising vacancies through the word-of-mouth of existing employees alone is likely to yield a limited pool of candidates and, unless the job is in a very niche area, unlikely to get the best possible candidates. It is also likely to reinforce any under or over representation of groups in the workplace.

Considerations when recruiting an apprentice

Apprenticeships are paid jobs which involve sustained training and significant new learning that leads to a nationally recognised qualification. An apprentice must:

- work with experienced staff
- learn job-specific skills
- study for a work-based qualification during their working week. For example, with a registered college or training organisation

Skills are devolved and as such there are some differences in the way apprenticeships work depending on which part of the UK they are based in. For more help and information in:

- England, go to www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/employer
- Northern Ireland, go to www.nidirect.gov.uk/apprenticeships
- Scotland, go to www.ourskillsforce.co.uk
- Wales, go to www.businesswales.gov.wales

While apprenticeship rights and responsibilities do vary between England, Northern Ireland Scotland and Wales, there are **five** common actions that an employer should take to ensure the apprenticeship is as beneficial as possible for both the organisation and the apprentice.

1. Find an apprenticeship framework or standard that suits the organisation

All apprenticeships must follow set criteria. Different sectors will have different apprenticeships that are relevant to the work they do. An employer should consider what skills they require their apprentice to learn and choose an apprenticeship that meets this.

2. Find a training provider

Once an apprenticeship framework or standard has been chosen an employer should find a local training provider (such as a local college) that will handle the apprentice's training, qualification and assessment. The training provider may also be able to help an employer with their recruitment process.

3. Check if the organisation may be eligible for a grant or funding

An employer may be entitled to some form of financial support if they employ an apprentice. In addition, an employer may be eligible to recover part of the training and qualification costs.

4. Advertise the apprenticeship

Create a job description and a person specification detailing what skills are essential and desirable for the role. This may then be used to advertise the apprenticeship. An employer can advertise the role themselves or the training provider may be able to assist them in this.

5. Hire an apprentice

From those who respond to the advert, an employer should choose the apprentice they want to hire and create an apprenticeship agreement (in England and Wales) or an employment contract (in Scotland). This should include:

- the rate of pay for the role
- the working conditions for the role
- how long the apprenticeship is for
- the training the apprentice will receive
- the qualifications the apprentice is working towards

Step 2: Starting to employ a younger worker

Younger workers will often have limited experience of workplace culture and therefore starting employment can be daunting a prospect. For an employer, it can require a bit more time to educate them about their role and how to handle a higher degree of responsibility than they may be used to. To help a younger worker adjust as quickly as possible, an employer should take a few simple actions both before the job starts and at an early stage of their employment.

Before the younger worker starts

Provide the details a younger worker will need for their first day

In advance of their employment beginning, an employer should provide all new starters with:

- the date and the time they should arrive for their first day
- the address of where they should go
- the name of the person they should ask for when they arrive

It can also be helpful for an employer to inform a new starter of what public transport is available, if there are any car park facilities and what food and drink is available in the office or nearby.

Company dress code

Employing younger workers

Many organisations expect their staff to dress in a certain way. Where this is required, an employer should inform a new starter of this before their first day and provide an explanation as to what is required and direction as to whether any uniform will be provided by the organisation.

For more information on dress code, go to www.acas.org.uk/dresscode

Financial assistance

A lot of organisations pay their staff on a monthly basis. A month can be a long time, especially when a younger worker has not been employed previously and has limited resources to pay for travel and work clothes etc. Where it is viable, it may be helpful if financial assistance can be offered during their initial months at work. For example, an employer could agree to pay an advance to a younger worker in the first month of their employment.

Managing workplace expectations

During the start of a younger worker's employment, their line manager should be clear to their colleagues how team workloads and performance may be affected. They should also remind the team that behaviours, such as banter, should never discriminate against younger workers, even where this is unintentional. This will often allay unwarranted concerns, reduce the potential for conflict and encourage colleagues to be more supportive.

For example...

Douglas is about to take on a younger worker, Hannah, who has recently graduated. The interview established that Hannah is unaccustomed to office routines but keen to learn, and she also brings expertise with new budgeting software that the team has been struggling with.

Douglas emails the team to let them know how Hannah can already help them, but that she will benefit from support when it comes to fitting into the office routine and culture. Douglas also points out that some of the higher profile tasks should not be left to Hannah unless she has mentor support.

It may sometimes be helpful to also discuss how an age-diverse workforce may approach work in different ways and how this can be beneficial to the organisation.

What are the younger worker's responsibilities?

A younger worker will often need to be told what will be required of them. An employer should not assume that a younger worker will simply know what is expected of them, however minor. While the expectations and duties of a younger worker will vary from organisation to organisation, **five key things** that all employers will usually require are:

- **Turn up on time** – an employer should make it clear that it is not acceptable to be late to work. It should be explained what impact their absence would have on their colleagues and that repeated lateness could lead to disciplinary action. For example, repeated lateness may result in a written warning and if attendance does not improve may eventually lead to dismissal
- **Dress appropriately** – if there is a dress code or policy then this should be shared or explained to a younger worker
- **Do the job properly** – it should be made clear to a younger worker what exactly they must do in their job, how they should do it and who to go to for help. If they have targets these should be explained so that a younger worker understands what the targets are and what may happen if they don't achieve them
- **Follow the rules of the organisation** – give them access to and/or explain the organisation's policies and procedures. It is important that a younger worker understands the organisation's policies and what may happen if they are not followed. For example, not following the health and safety policy could lead to serious injury and/or could be a disciplinary matter
- **Treat colleagues and customers with respect** - the importance of respecting equality and diversity, and working productively with colleagues and customers, should be made clear.

Explaining clearly to a younger worker what their responsibilities are and what is expected of them should mean that minor issues, such as not wearing the correct uniform or not answering the phone in the correct manner, do not materialise or can be resolved quickly if they do.

Considering the workplace culture

The workplace culture is the expected behaviours, values and beliefs of everyone who works for the organisation. These vary from organisation to organisation.

Having a good workplace culture can help an organisation:

- attract, motivate and retain top talent
- optimise its productivity
- adapt to meet any changing demands or conditions

Employing younger workers

The culture that a younger worker experiences and learns will be shaped by the managers and colleagues they work with. A line manager should talk to a new younger worker; highlight what is expected of them and what the values of the organisation are. If this is not done, a younger worker may form their own idea of the culture, which may not be correct and may lead to issues at a later point.

An employer should consider what the behaviours and attitudes of the workplace are and how these can best be passed on to a new younger worker.

For example...

Joe has just started his first job, working part-time at the weekend. His manager explains the role to Joe and makes it clear that there is a culture within the company where good performance is recognised and rewarded.

During the first week Joe is told that one of his colleagues has just been rewarded for consistent good performance by receiving a voucher to spend at a department store.

After hearing that Joe handled a very difficult customer in a professional and courteous manner, his manager has a quiet word. She praises Joe for his attitude and mentions that if this continues she will suggest to management that his good performance is rewarded also.

Providing an effective induction

Training a younger worker will usually require more planning and flexibility than older workers. Many younger workers have a limited understanding of what their working day will require and what their employer's expectations of them are. It is important not to assume what tasks they know how to perform and what support they will need.

An employer should plan a younger worker's induction that includes what, when and who will be involved in the younger worker's induction, and in what order this will be done. How long an induction should be will vary on the work of the organisation and the younger worker's role. Some inductions may only be for a day or a week, while others may last several months to ensure that the younger worker is fully supported as they learn the role.

An effective induction for a younger worker should:

- provide an introduction to their role and how they fit within their team and the organisation as a whole

Employing younger workers

- provide practical guidance in areas such as working hours, breaks (including toilet breaks), working conditions and company dress code
- highlight how the organisation will expect them to behave to customers and colleagues
- explain if the organisation has policies on the use of personal devices in work (e.g. mobile phones) and/or using social media responsibly (e.g. derogatory comments posted online about the organisation or other members of staff could lead to disciplinary action)
- make sure that they are competent and comfortable at the basic duties of the role and provide training where necessary e.g. if the role involves taking or making telephone calls provide training on how they are expected to handle each call
- make sure they understand the health and safety procedures of the organisation and why these must be followed
- help them understand their annual leave entitlement (and how it is calculated if they work part time or on a zero hours contract)
- ensure their tax code is correct and check that they understand their payslip (deductions for tax and student loan repayments etc.)
- explain how their performance will be assessed e.g. is there a probationary period and are there any targets that they are expected to meet
- include regular catch-ups with their line manager to discuss everyday issues and address any concerns that may arise
- provide plenty of opportunities for them to ask questions
- help them settle in to the organisation, giving them the opportunity to get to know their colleagues and integrate into the wider workplace culture
- where there is a recognised trade union, be introduced to a trade union representative, giving them the opportunity to discuss the role of a union and trade union membership

Acas has an e-learning course, entitled Starting work, aimed at informing younger workers about their rights and responsibilities in the workplace. An employer could use this as part of their induction programme. For more information, go to www.acas.org.uk/elearning

What should a line manager get from the induction process?

The induction should also help a line manager:

- become familiar with the younger worker and what their goals and aspirations are
- identify the younger worker's strengths and areas for development
- identify any concerns they might have and allow a line manager to provide reassurance and/or resolve the concern
- ensure that the younger worker has been provided with all the information and support they need to make the best possible start at

the organisation

Acas offers a template induction checklist that employers can amend for their own needs at www.acas.org.uk/templates. There is also a detailed Acas guide on induction at www.acas.org.uk/recruitment

Step 3: The rights of a younger worker

A younger worker has rights that an employer needs to consider that can sometimes differ from the rest of their workforce.

A manager should always check if a younger worker has other employment as this may affect the working hours they are available for and when their rest periods must be.

Employment Status

Generally anyone who is not genuinely self-employed and works for an organisation is a worker or an employee. Younger workers may not be aware that this makes a difference to their rights and responsibilities.

A younger worker who has worker status will work under some form of contract but has fewer employment rights and responsibilities than an employee. For example, casual workers or agency staff can usually decline work offered to them. Workers have rights including a minimum of 5.6 weeks paid annual leave, not to be discriminated against on the grounds of their age, and to relevant National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage rates.

A younger worker who is an employee is someone who works under an employment contract and is usually obliged to work a minimum number of hours per week. In addition to the rights a worker gets they have further rights including the right to request flexible working, not to be unfairly dismissed and to family friendly rights such as maternity leave.

Internships

Internships are sometimes used as a way for a younger worker to gain experience in a specific sector. There is no special legal definition of what an internship is. The employment status of an intern will often be either a worker or an employee. An intern is therefore usually entitled to receive at least the National Minimum Wage (NMW) etc. The only exceptions are if the intern is:

- on a sandwich placement that is part of a higher education course or
- a student carrying out work shadowing

In these circumstances, they will not normally be entitled to the NMW.

Employing younger workers

Younger workers may also be employed on a zero hours contract without realising the legal implications and rights surrounding these arrangements. For example, they cannot be required to work exclusively for one employer under a zero hours contract. For more information, go to www.acas.org.uk/zerohours

For more information, go to www.acas.org.uk/employmentstatus

Restrictions on offering full-time employment

Restrictions on working below minimum school leaving age

In the UK, while **part-time employment may begin from the age of 13**, all children must remain in full time education until they reach the minimum school leaving age. They must not work during school hours or for more than one hour before school (unless local bylaws allow it).

Minimum UK school leaving age

The minimum school leaving age means that **once a child reaches 16 years old** (or will be 16 years old by the end of the school summer holidays), they may leave school on the last Friday in June. Until this point, they must be in full time education.

In Scotland and Wales, a young person does not have to remain in some form of education or training once they have reached the minimum school leaving age and may go straight into full time employment.

Further restrictions in England

In England, **a young person must remain in some form of education or training until they are 18 years old**. During this time, a young person has the following choices:

- full time education or training, such as school or college or
- work-based learning, such as an apprenticeship or
- work or volunteer (for 20 hours or more a week) while in part-time education or training

A young person who does not follow one of the three choices may be investigated by the Local Education Authority and they and/or their parents could be liable for a fine.

National minimum wage

Employing younger workers

Most younger workers who are at least 16 years old will be entitled to receive the National Minimum Wage (NMW). The rate of pay that a younger worker must (at least) receive will depend on their age and whether they are an apprentice. It usually changes every October.

From April a 'National Living Wage' will be introduced, which all workers aged 25 and over must receive.

For more information and the latest rates, go to www.acas.org.uk/nmw

Rest periods

There are certain limitations when employing 16 and 17 year olds that employers need to comply with. A younger worker aged 16 or 17 years old must be allowed:

- at least twelve hours of uninterrupted rest within any 24 hour period in which they work.
- a rest break of at least 30 minutes if a shift will last longer than 4 and a half hours
- at least 48 hours of rest each week. This should be uninterrupted rest

Child workers that have not reached the [minimum school leaving age](#) must not work:

- for more than 4 hours without taking a break of at least 1 hour
- without having a two week break from any work during the school holidays in each calendar year

Night-time working

Younger workers under the age of 18 must not work between the hours of midnight and 4am. In addition, they are usually not allowed to work after 10pm or before 7am unless they work in:

- agriculture
- retail trading
- postal or newspaper delivery
- a catering business, hotel, public house, restaurant etc.
- bakery

On occasions, an employer may need a worker to work during the night to maintain continuity of service or production, or to respond to a sudden increase in demand for services or products. In these circumstances, when there are no appropriate adult workers available, a younger worker under the age of 18 may be asked to work between 10pm-midnight or 4am-7am.

Employing younger workers

Child workers that have not reached the [minimum school leaving age](#) must not work before 7am or after 7pm.

For more information on night-time working, go to www.hse.gov.uk/youngpeople

Health and safety

Research has found that younger workers often have little awareness of health and safety risks within the workplace, making them more likely to have an accident. An employer **must do a risk assessment of their workplace that takes into account a younger worker's probable lack of experience and maturity**. An employer may find it helpful to talk to staff already in the role about the risks and what preventive measures they already take.

An employer must also provide a younger worker (and all other staff) with:

- information on any health and safety precautions the employee needs to take to protect them from harm
- any training needed to do the job safely
- any equipment and protective clothing required for the role
- adequate and appropriate supervision
- information on what to do if there is a fire, accident or other emergency
- an understanding of where information about the organisation's insurance policy can be found, in case they get hurt or ill through work

For more information on health and safety, go to www.hse.gov.uk/youngpeople

Equality

Age is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act.

This protection applies if someone is discriminated against because they are a specific age e.g. they are 18. It will also apply if someone is being discriminated against because they are 'younger' or because the age group they fall into is being discriminated against in some way.

Employees who are discriminated against because they are 'perceived' to be older or younger than they actually are will also be protected - this could include an older worker who is perceived to be younger, or a younger worker who is perceived to be older.

Employing younger workers

Also, any employee of any age who observes younger workers being discriminated against will also be covered under the Equality Act e.g. where an employee is placed on shorter shifts because they complained to their manager that a new younger worker had been discriminated against.

In some cases, age discrimination can be objectively justified. For example, the particular training requirements of the job exclude people of a certain age.

For more information on age discrimination, go to www.acas.org.uk/age

Step 4: Supporting a younger worker

For many younger workers, entering a workplace for the first time may require adopting new behaviours and techniques which might take time to learn. For example, taking responsibility for balancing their workload to meet various deadlines can be difficult when coming from an educational environment where they are used to a school timetable.

The more support and training a younger worker is given the more likely they are to learn the necessary skills required to do the role and become an important part of the organisation.

Line managers

An important part of a line manager's role is to ensure that a younger worker fits into the team and works effectively alongside their colleagues.

When a younger worker starts working for the organisation their line manager should:

- lead by example, showing the type of behaviours that are expected from the younger worker
- check that the younger worker understands their role and responsibilities
- find out what the younger worker can and can't do
- ensure the younger worker is trained and supported so they can meet all the responsibilities of their role
- encourage the younger worker to come to them if they need any help or have any problems
- arrange frequent reviews and catch ups to talk about how the younger worker is doing and resolve any issues that may arise
- arrange mid-year and end-of-year reviews to discuss the younger worker's progress more formally. As part of these discussions, training and development needs should be considered

Employing younger workers

It is important that a line manager gives a younger worker constructive feedback on their performance.

A line manager should talk to a younger worker if their behaviour, conduct or performance is not satisfactory. Dealing with an issue early usually means that it can be corrected before it becomes the norm. It is important that a line manager clearly explains what the issue is and how they can improve, while also giving them encouragement and support.

For example...

Beate has just started working at a retail shop. She works 9-5 and catches a train into work. The train should get her into work at 8.55am but can sometimes be delayed, meaning that she is late.

Her manager Siobhan has an informal chat with her about her regular late arrivals. She explains why it is important to get in to work on time and the impact it can have on her colleagues, who have to cover her work while she is not there. This has sometimes meant that the store is not ready to open at 9.30am as it should.

Beate had not realised the impact that being 10-15 minutes late can have on the company. She looks at the train times and decides to start catching an earlier train, which should mean she gets into work on time even if it is delayed.

Feedback is just as important where a younger worker's performance has been good. Providing positive feedback can give a younger worker more confidence in their performance and abilities. It also helps to ensure that positive behaviours are continued.

Acas offers a wide variety of training courses, some specifically aimed at line managers. For further information, go to www.acas.org.uk/training

Mentors

Mentors can be used by an employer to act as a support mechanism for a younger worker. A mentor can answer any questions a younger worker may have and act as a role model to highlight how they should behave. Usually a mentor will be a more senior member of staff that is chosen by an employer or a manager to help a new younger worker.

A mentor will typically:

- touch base with the younger worker to see how they are coping on a regular basis

Employing younger workers

- be approachable and available for the younger worker to raise any work-related concerns with them
- identify any training opportunities for the younger worker or where possible, influence what tasks are allocated to them

For example...

Before a new younger worker starts, their line manager talks to Liz who has worked at the company for several years and is now one of their most experienced operators. The line manager asks if she would be willing to mentor the new starter and explains what this would involve. The line manager would particularly like Liz to help in identifying what training may be needed and which tasks should be allocated to the new younger worker.

In the younger worker's first week, an hour is allocated for Liz to talk to the new starter about her experiences and answer any questions the younger worker may have.

Buddies

Buddies can operate slightly differently to mentors. Usually a buddy is a colleague of the younger worker and could be of a similar age. A buddy will typically:

- work closely with the younger worker
- be someone that the younger worker can talk to about anything, even if it may appear obvious or silly
- explain and resolve any simple issues that may arise over the course of the working day

For example...

Before a new younger worker starts, their line manager talks to Kendrick who has been doing the job for a year and would be a good buddy for the new starter. She talks to him about this, explaining what would be expected, and that it could be a good developmental opportunity.

Kendrick confirms that he is happy to buddy the new starter. The younger worker is introduced to Kendrick and he will work next to them for the first few months. Kendrick makes it clear to the new starter that if they have any problems or questions he is happy to help.

Mentoring and buddy systems often work best when they are used in conjunction with each other. An employer should consider appointing both a mentor and a buddy to help new younger workers in their workplace.

Working with trade unions

It will often be useful and productive for an employer to discuss plans to manage and develop younger workers with any recognised trade unions in the workplace. This helps trade unions to be seen supporting current or potential members, and it helps employers to draw upon a considerable amount of additional experience in learning and development. This may be handled through joint meetings, with union learning representatives, or by talking to the trade union where these channels are not available.

Trade union representatives themselves are often trained in skills that make them particularly valuable as mentors. These include awareness of the wider organisation, how issues arising have been successfully dealt with in the past and a wide variety of communication skills.

Trade union representatives can also offer an alternative and confidential source of support and advice for a younger worker when problems or concerns arise in the workplace.

Training and development

Most younger workers will require some training to do their job effectively. This may simply mean teaching them how to use a piece of machinery or software that is needed in their role. Alternatively, it may require training and practicing softer skills such as customer service training.

An employer should analyse what basic training a younger worker requires when they begin their employment. An informal discussion with the younger worker may clarify what training is initially required. In the following weeks of employment a younger worker's line manager should then observe them doing the job and identify any gaps in their knowledge, skills or behaviours that they may not be aware of themselves.

Training approaches include:

- providing opportunities to shadow more experienced staff members
- providing a mentor and/or buddy where appropriate
- allowing a younger worker the time to read existing internal resources e.g. policies and procedures
- sending a younger worker on external/online training courses
- supporting a younger worker to join career relevant associations or institutes

Employing younger workers

Training and development should be an on-going consideration for all employees and should therefore be reviewed on a regular basis. Performance discussions, such as an end of year review, can be a good opportunity to uncover training needs.

Step 5: Retaining younger workers

In the modern work environment it is increasingly rare for employees to stay with one organisation for their entire working life so a certain amount of staff turnover is likely to be inevitable. However, an employer can benefit from taking certain actions to improve staff retention.

The benefits to retaining younger workers

While some employers are willing to accept a constant flow of staff through their workplace, many employers are keen to retain staff and limit staff turnover as best they can.

Retaining younger workers means that:

- it reduces the need for recruitment and the associated costs that this requires
- the age diversity of the workforce is widened, and opens the organisation up to different ways of working and may give access to different customers and markets
- the knowledge and skills acquired following training and on-going support are retained within the organisation
- the reputation of the organisation is often improved because it can be used to show that when people join they want to stay. This can then help to attract future younger workers

Why do younger workers leave?

Younger workers may leave for many different reasons. Usually these reasons can be split into pull factors and push factors.

Pull factors are 'pulling' the younger worker away from their employer and current role. For example, the offer of a new job or caring responsibilities. Employers can rarely do much in response to pull factors because they are usually reasons outside of the organisation's control

Push factors are issues related to their job that are 'pushing' the younger worker to leave. An employer can have a significant influence on push factors and may be able to take steps to address these.

Employing younger workers

Typical push factors	Ways to mitigate
<p>Lack of career prospects – such as ‘bottlenecks’, which can prevent a desired progression rate and lead to a lack of development for staff wanting to progress.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offer opportunities to acquire new skills/experience. For example, a waiter may be interested in developing kitchen skills • consider how staff could be developed further. For example, offer opportunities to shadow senior colleagues and use a ‘deputy’ system to cover absences/busy periods • clearly communicate how progression may take place and manage expectations around how frequent opportunities are likely to arise • larger employers might consider adopting policies to accelerate/develop high potential employees • consider if there are further training opportunities that may benefit the individual and the organisation
<p>Problems with colleagues or line manager – such as falling outs which if not resolved can affect the motivation and engagement of staff in the workplace.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • train managers so that they are fully equipped to effectively manage and communicate with their staff. For example, a manager who has been trained in handling difficult conversations is likely to approach matters in a more considered way • promote an open door policy for staff members to discuss any problems with management. Many problems can be raised and resolved during the course of everyday working relationships. • have clear discipline and grievance procedures and investigate any complaints thoroughly. This can help to give staff confidence that if they raise any issues they will be taken seriously
<p>Working arrangements – such as a desire to work part time or terms and conditions that have become unsatisfactory.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consider if there are any reasonable actions that might improve the working environment. For example, could staff be provided with a break area • promote flexible working arrangements that enable staff whose priorities change to continue to work. These can be simple and have minimal impact on the business. • review pay arrangements and conditions

Employing younger workers

	<p>on a regular basis to check they are competitive in the industry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• hold exit interviews with all staff that leave to see if there are any underlying push issues. Responses can help an employer determine if action needs to be taken in their workplace
<p>Lack of engagement in the workplace – such as a feeling that management do not consider the views of their workers before making decisions that directly affect them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• hold regular meetings, focus groups and one-to-one chats with staff about issues that affect them. For example, consult staff on possible ways to improve the organisation's customer services• hold employee engagement surveys to gauge employee satisfaction and motivation levels. This can help an employer gain an insight into what factors might encourage workers to stay or leave in the future• reward schemes can motivate staff and recognise their efforts. For example, an employer could have a scheme that rewards good performance with some vouchers at a worker's preferred store

Holding exit interviews

Sometimes a younger worker will leave the organisation. Holding an exit interview can help an employer understand why they are leaving and get some feedback on what the organisation does well and what could be improved.

When holding an exit interview a line manager should:

- explain the purpose of the meeting
- keep it informal
- ask why they are leaving?
- ask what they enjoyed about working there?
- ask what might have encouraged them to stay?
- record what was discussed and consider if any further action may be required

While the person leaving may not always disclose the real reasons for leaving or their true views about the organisation, what they do say can be valuable to an employer. Collecting information about why younger workers leave can highlight if there are any common reasons that could be addressed that would help to retain other younger workers.

For example...

A building firm has a policy that promotes holding an exit interview whenever an employee leaves. Colin, who is in charge of recruitment, realises that several younger workers have left the organisation within a year of starting work.

He collects the notes from each exit interview to look for common reasons. All say they are leaving to develop themselves further. This concerns Colin because the organisation does have a policy to encourage employees to move around the business to learn new skills.

Colin proposes to amend the induction process so that it highlights more clearly the opportunities available to all employees should they want to develop further.

Employing younger workers

Further information

Acas learning online

Acas offers free E-Learning on a wide range of topics including, Starting work, which is aimed at younger workers. Employers could use this as part of their induction. For more information go to www.acas.org.uk/elearning

Acas training

Acas offers a managing younger workers course and training courses for line managers that are carried out by experienced Acas staff who work with businesses every day.

Go to www.acas.org.uk/training for up-to-date information about our training and booking places on face-to-face courses.

Also, Acas specialists can visit an organisation, diagnose issues in its workplace, and tailor training and support to address the challenges it faces. To find out more, see to the Acas website page Business solutions.

TUC-Acas-CIPD guidance

Managing future talent

Acas guidance

Recruiting staff

Starting staff: Induction guide

Guidance on discrimination is available at www.acas.org.uk/equality

Guidance for younger workers starting their first job is available at www.acas.org.uk/firstjob

Additional help

Employers may also be able to seek assistance from groups where they are members. For example, if an employer is a member of the Confederation of British Industry or the Federation of Small Businesses, it could seek its help and guidance.

If an employee is a trade union member, they can seek help and guidance from their trade union representative or equality representative.

Employing younger workers

Keep up-to-date and stay informed

Visit www.acas.org.uk for:

- Employment relations and employment law guidance – free to view, download or share
- Tools and resources including free-to-download templates, forms and checklists
- An introduction to other Acas services including mediation, conciliation, training and arbitration and the Acas Early Conciliation service
- Research and discussion papers on the UK workplace and employment practices
- Details of upcoming Acas training courses, conferences and events

Sign up for the free Acas e-newsletter:

The Acas email newsletter is a great way of keeping up-to-date with changes to employment law and to hear about upcoming events in your area. Find out more at:

www.acas.org.uk/subscribe

Acas e-learning. Our e-learning covers a range of employment relations topics and can help you understand both best practice and current legislation. Our e-learning is free to use and can be accessed directly on our website:

www.acas.org.uk/elearning

The Acas Model Workplace. This engaging and interactive tool can help you diagnose employment relations issues in your workplace. The tool will work with you to identify areas of improvement you could consider and will point you toward the latest guidance and best practice:

www.acas.org.uk/modelworkplace

Acas Helpline. Call the Acas helpline for free and impartial advice. We will provide you with clear and confidential guidance about any kind of dispute or query that you have about relationship issues within the workplace. You may want to know about employment rights and rules, best practice or you may need advice about a dispute. Whatever it is, our team are on hand. Find out more: www.acas.org.uk/helpline

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