

What is it?

- Workplace health and safety is about protecting the health and safety of people at work, or those who may be affected by work - including customers and other visitors.
- Workplace health and safety laws protect the rights of workers, including young people who are on work placement.
- Organisations and businesses that employ workers also have health and safety rights. They have the right to expect that all workers and visitors to their workplaces will take care and co-operate with work health and safety rules.

Workplace Health and Safety Laws

Workplace health and safety laws aim to protect people from harm to their health and safety because of work - organisations and businesses must make sure that, as far as is 'reasonably practicable', the health and safety of their workers - including those on work placements is protected.

'Reasonably practicable' is the legal term used to describe how an employer has to weigh up the level of risk against the trouble, time and money needed to control it.

When you are on your work placement you must make sure that you take reasonable care for your own health and safety and make sure the things you do don't affect the health and safety of others - including other workers and customers.

Under health and safety law the organisation has to ensure that you are safe from physical and psychological injury, including bullying, as far as they reasonably can. If it is not 'reasonably practicable' to remove risks, they must reduce them as much as they can.

The employer may help to protect your safety by providing you with:

- appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- instructions or training on how to do your work safely.

You need to:

- take reasonable care for your own health and safety
- take reasonable care to ensure you don't affect the health and safety of others
- carry out your tasks in a safe way
- follow the work health and safety instructions given to you; and
- co-operate with any reasonable workplace health and safety policies and procedures.

What does 'taking reasonable care' mean?

It means doing what any sensible person would do in the same situation - considering your: level of experience, understanding of the job, skills, access to relevant information and awareness of the possible consequences to health and safety if you don't do what you can to avoid risk.

To do this you need to think about:

- what could happen to you at the workplace,
- how likely it is to happen,
- how bad it might be if it does happen,
- what you can do to reduce or remove the risk, and
- the consequences of reducing or removing the risk.

Taking reasonable care is simple. Just:

- follow all instructions you are given as far as you are able to
- follow the health and safety policies or procedures your employer has told you about
- talk to your employer or supervisor if you have any concerns about your, or other people's, health and safety in the workplace.

Other ways of making sure you take reasonable care are:

- carefully carrying out any tasks you have been given
- not doing tasks that you do not have the skills to do
- not doing anything that would clearly be unsafe.

Discussion/Activity

- Think of some ways you take care of your own health and safety when you are in school.
- What are the hazards and risks you come across when you are in school?
- Does the school have health and safety policies and procedures you must follow when you are in school?
- How do you follow them?