



RISK CONTROL

Children in the workplace

With many parents working full time, it may become necessary at times to bring young people into places of work, and/or work alongside family at home. This can highlight a number of risks specific to the situation, and we have guidance on following some simple best practises for minimising these risks.

The Home

Don't underestimate the hazards within the home. When working from home with children, it may not be as easy to maintain the usual levels of supervision, so additional consideration may be necessary to manage hazards within the home, gardens, driveways and garages / sheds.

Where possible it's best to consider:

- Making time to regularly check on them during the day (frequency dependent on age etc), a simple visual and / or quick one-to-one to confirm they are safe and comfortable.
- Furniture availability and suitability (seating, power points for phones, laptops, access to play equipment etc).
- The need to relocate or secure cleaning products both inside and outside the home, including bleach, washing tablets, pesticides, patio cleaners etc.
- Locking windows and doors to prevent access to roads or falls from height (or even access to stairs for younger children)
- Securing any fencing to ensure children stay contained within the safety of play areas.

- Covering or restricting access to garden ponds and water features as appropriate
- Relocation of potentially hazardous tools like garden shears, mowers etc.
- Management of any interaction between animals and young persons to manage hazards like aggressive behaviour, or the need for more thorough cleaning.

Safe Place

Where there is no reasonable alternative other than bringing young persons into the workplace, employees and employers should adopt a sensible approach. High risk or hazardous environments where a lack of experience and awareness of potential risks becomes critical are not suitable for children and should be avoided. These environments may include areas containing machinery, transport yards or commercial kitchens.

Identify if the workplace can provide a child friendly location, one away from moving equipment, processes, hot surfaces and significant noise and vibration.

Consider how the young person's time can be organised in an age-appropriate way. Some children may require high levels of supervision and interaction, meaning including them within the main area of a workspace may not be a suitable, and separate space may need to be found.

Where possible, prior to introducing children, manage the work environment to remove potential hazards and identify any resources needed.

Considerations include:

- There should be the facility to regularly check on young persons during the day (frequency dependent on age etc), a simple visual and / or quick one-to-one to confirm young persons are safe and comfortable.
- Furniture availability and suitability (seating, power points for phones, laptops, access to play equipment etc).
- Access to welfare facilities to potentially include changing facilities, toilets, drinking water supply and facilities to store and warm food.
- The need to relocate, secure or protect any accessible biological and chemical agents, exposed hot pipe work / services, work tools, vulnerable glazing, sharp edges or trip hazards

- Locking off any accessible access equipment, ladders or work-from-height equipment.
- If workplace food provisions are used, ensuring any allergy information is clearly communicated.
- Suitable facilities for the storage of any medication and managing waste (secure fridge, sharps and waste disposal).
- Securing or restricting windows and doors to prevent access to hazard areas or falls from height.
- Access to WIFI with any age appropriate access controls.

Safe Person

In some situations, hazards cannot be removed from the work place, in these situation supervision levels should be increased to ensure such hazards are managed.

All children should be introduced to the site / location, given clear instruction on safe and inaccessible locations. This introduction should include methods of raising concerns and suitable points of contact in the absence of a parent or carer.

Full instruction on fire evacuation procedures must be provided, which must include the need for prompt evacuation, description of the alarm, the escape routes and location of the evacuation points.

A daily check should be performed of all areas accessible to young person, these checks should look for new hazards and change to the layout. Where required, increase supervision levels, and if needs or behaviour change, the suitability of the workplace should then be reassessed.

ROSPA have provided some useful guides on protecting young persons, these can be found here;

<https://www.rospa.com/Home-Safety/UK/Scotland/Projects/Take-Action-Today.aspx>

<https://www.rospa.com/Home-Safety/UK/Scotland/Projects/past-projects/Not-for-Play.aspx>

<https://www.rospa.com/Road-Safety/Advice/Vehicles/Child-safety>