





Young worker health and safety toolkit

A toolkit for managers, supervisors, leaders, mentors, and families, to engage with young workers about work health and safety as they transition from school or study into work.

What's inside?

-  Introduction
-  Factors that impact young workers' health and safety
-  Frequently asked questions
-  Resources



Where you see this icon you can
access resources to help keep
young workers safe at work



Introduction to the Young worker health and safety toolkit

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland's (WHSQ) young worker toolkit is designed to help manage the physical and psychological safety of young workers as they transition from school or study into work. As young workers often lack the confidence to speak up about safety, it is important that others around them with influence or control, provide extra encouragement and support to help bridge this gap.

Employers, supervisors, managers, mentors, and family who understand how young people learn, and whom young workers look up to, are well placed to offer support and help build awareness of work health and safety (WHS) risks and how to confidently raise concerns.

Safety leadership and culture play an important role in influencing young worker behaviour. Those who work with young workers have the opportunity to lead and positively influence a young worker's:

- WHS values and beliefs
- perception of risk
- motivation to comply
- safety knowledge
- participation in WHS initiatives.



For more information on safety leadership and developing a positive safety culture, visit the **Safety capability, leadership and culture** webpage.

Purpose of the young worker toolkit

As a supporter of young workers, this toolkit will help you understand:

- the unique characteristics of young workers relevant to managing their WHS
- how to teach young workers to identify and manage risks and build their safety capability
- how work design can improve the young worker safety
- the importance of supportive workplace safety culture
- where to find practical resources to help you engage with young workers on WHS.



For more information on applying the principles of Safety Capability to create a safer more productive workplace through leadership and teamwork, visit the **Safety Leadership and Teamwork** webpage.

FOCUS AREAS

Taking action to improve these areas...

Processes and structures

Leadership and teamwork

Skills and motivation

MECHANISMS

...will strengthen organisational building blocks...

Systems

Culture

Competence

OUTCOME

...that together, produce safety capability...

Capability

IMPACT

...and drive superior business performance.

+ Prevent injuries and illnesses

+ Promote safe and productive workplaces

+ Support sustainable recovery and return to work



How to use this toolkit

The toolkit contains a 3-step approach to help build your knowledge, review your role, and take action to support young worker WHS.

STEP



1



Build your knowledge

Understand the factors that influence the WHS of young workers.

2



Review your role

Checklists at the end of each section will help you reflect on what you can do to keep young workers healthy and safe.

3



Take action

The tools and resources can help you plan activities to keep young workers healthy and safe.

You can use the 'Your Actions' template to plan and commit to what positive action you will take, including review dates.

Safety partnerships, real outcomes



Need some help?

Take advantage of the **Injury Prevention and Management (IPaM) program** to review your current safety management system and provide guidance on taking positive action to support your young workers.



The need to take action

For workers' compensation purposes, a serious injury is defined as one that keeps someone off work for five days or more, potentially affecting their ability to work for the rest of their lives.

In Queensland, approximately 4400 young workers are seriously injured at work each year.

Younger workers exposed to riskier work

Young workers are more exposed to risks and are involved in more frequent incidents than older workers. Risks faced by young workers include:

- repetitive work
- manual work
- noisy work
- hazardous chemicals
- fatigue through skipping breaks and working unsafe hours
- contact with electricity
- workplace violence and/or bullying

Young worker profile

In Queensland, young people transitioning from school or study can work in all types of industries, under different arrangements, including:

- full-time employment
- part-time, casual, or seasonal employment
- apprentices, trainees, and vocational education students
- unpaid work, such as structured work experience or volunteer work.

Because young workers are often employed as temporary or seasonal workers or interns, they may:

- feel pressured to perform all tasks
- avoid asking questions or raising concerns
- be exposed to risky tasks with minimal supervision.

RESOURCE: Jason's Story

Jason was just 20 years old when he was electrocuted at a construction site in Clermont in 2012. He had only been working there for nine days.

His dad Michael Garrels is now a Workplace Health and Safety Queensland Safety Advocate, raising awareness of the importance of workplace safety and the need for effective communication between sub-contractors on construction sites, and appropriate supervision and supportive mentoring of young workers.

'The old and wiser should be looking after the young and inexperienced, and for the younger guys who are doing a job, if you don't know—ask. If you're left unsupervised and don't know how to do a task, ask to be supervised, it's as simple as that. Be an advocate for your own safety—we want to prevent deaths happening out there.' – Michael Garrels



Jason's story



Action: Watch the film, show it at a team meeting or training session and lead a group discussion about the film's message.



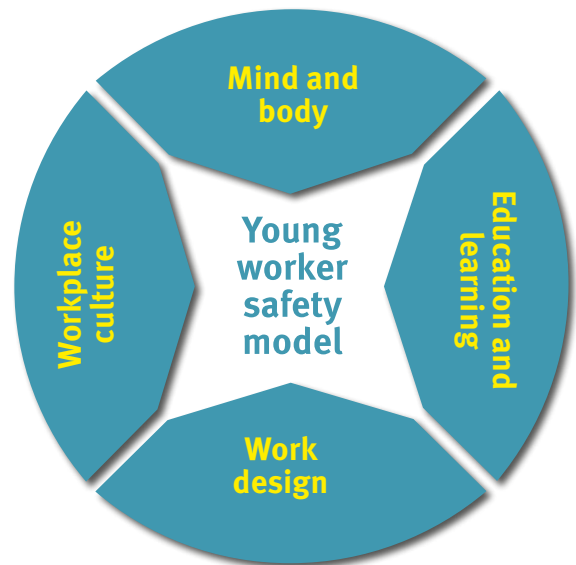
Who is responsible for keeping young workers safe?

Who?	How can they contribute?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employers (who employ or engage a young worker).• Supervisors and managers (the person the young worker directly report to).• Work health and safety decision-makers.• Peak employer and worker associations.• Other workers (peer to peer relationships).• Peers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand the characteristics of young people that make them vulnerable to work injuries.• Design work to better manage WHS risks and improve health and wellbeing, job satisfaction and productivity.• Show leadership and create a workplace culture that supports the WHS of workers.• Consult with workers on processes that enable young workers to confidently raise WHS concerns or issues, ask questions and contribute to safety discussions that affect them.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Education and training providers (schools, registered training organisations, universities).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve the WHS knowledge and capabilities of students, apprentices, and trainees.• Prepare young people to transition to working safely.• Communicate with worksites that host apprentices or trainees to ensure WHS is a priority.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents and caregivers of young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have conversations about the importance of WHS. Emphasise they have the right to speak up if they feel unsafe.• Share experiences and WHS learnings.• Recognise the risks and take an interest in the WHS of young people at work.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Youth service providers.• Not-for-profit organisations.• Regulators such as WHSQ.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have conversations with young people to positively influence their WHS values and beliefs.• Make young workers' WHS a priority issue in your communities.• Produce/share relevant resources to educate key stakeholders.



Factors that impact young workers' health and safety

Four areas can positively or negatively impact the WHS of young workers.



Area	Description	Key points	Influencers
1. Mind and body	Understand the unique characteristics of a young person to help have genuine conversations about their strengths and weaknesses to reduce WHS risks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Risk profile• Inexperience• Developmental factors• Generational factors.• Role modelling.• Risk-taking behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents.• Schools and teachers.• Employers and supervisors.• Youth service providers.• Government.
2. Education and learning	Develop their ability to assess and manage risks to help them keep safe at work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Risk management capability.• Education and training programs.• Work experience/good safety mentors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools and teachers.• Vocational training sector.• Universities and colleges.• Industry associations and skills councils.• Government.
3. Work design	Good work design eliminates or minimises hazards and risks so far as is reasonably practical. It can also optimise health and wellbeing, productivity, and job satisfaction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good work design• Induction and training.• Supervision and feedback.• Support and mentoring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employers.• Supervisors and managers.• Employer associations.• Unions.• Government.
4. Workplace culture	A positive workplace culture driven by leadership, consultation and effective communication is vital to engaging young workers in health and safety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear organisational values.• Demonstrated leadership.• Genuine consultation and communication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employers.• Supervisors and managers.• Industry associations.• Unions.• Government.



Mind and body

Young people have specific characteristics that influence their behaviour, attitudes, and decision-making. Taking the time to understand these characteristics can help employers, co-workers' parents and teachers influence the values and beliefs, risk perception and motivations of young workers towards WHS.

The three main physical and psychological factors that influence young workers' WHS are:

- a unique risk profile
- peer influence
- risk-taking behaviour.

Unique risk profile

Young workers are more likely to be injured at work because:

- they are often inexperienced
- the likelihood of an injury is higher during their first six months in a new job
- developmental and generational factors can increase the likelihood of being injured.

Young people are a diverse group of individuals who will react and behave differently in different situations. Understanding this unique risk profile can help you determine the best method of engaging and communicating with them.

Developmental factors are common characteristics present in young people aged between 15 and 24.



Young people as young as 11 can, under certain conditions, commence working in Queensland while still attending school.

The Industrial Relations Education Committee (IREC) have developed an information brochure for employers and workers on their respective rights and responsibilities in the workplace for this group of young people.



Visit **business.qld.gov.au** for more information on employer and parent obligations of working children.





Mind and body

Developmental factors are common characteristics present in young people aged between 15 and 24 as they transition from school and study to work.

Developmental factor	Description
Cognition	The brain does not finish developing until the mid-20s, which means the ability to perform complex tasks, problem-solve and multi-task can be lower in young workers. The areas of the brain that develop last are typically those responsible for logical decision making, problem solving and controlling impulses.
Physical	Young people are still developing their strength, fitness, coordination, and need more sleep and recovery periods. Tasks, equipment, and work environments designed by, and for more experienced workers, may increase WHS risks to young workers.
Social	A desire to impress the supervisor and others to fit in, means young workers typically model their behaviour (right or wrong) on their co-workers. They are also more likely to avoid asking questions and raising concerns

Generational factors also influence young people.

Generational factor	Description
Learning styles	As young workers have typically been exposed to more interactive and self-directed learning, using 'hands-on' training to complement traditional, classroom-based forms of education may be beneficial.
Information and communication	Young workers may engage and respond better to information provided using images and technology, rather than highly technical written documents. Communicating through a range of methods, including technology, alongside more traditional methods such as one-on-one discussions, mentoring and team meetings, may help create a better learning environment.
Risk perception	Young workers may not recognise dangerous situations, and as result, are less likely to ask questions and/or report safety concerns. You can address this gap by providing ongoing support and education to help develop their risk identification and management skills.



Mind and body

Risk-taking behaviour

For young workers, the combination of a developing brain and a desire to learn and experience new things, can lead to risk-taking without regard to potential consequences. As young workers may not recognise a dangerous situation, simply instructing a young worker not to take risks is an unreliable control measure. Being overly protective is not ideal either, as it denies young people the opportunity to develop personal decision making and risk management skills. Investing time to plan and design how work

will be completed will help young workers develop their risk management skills and make them more confident to raise WHS concerns.

Peer influence

More experienced workers can help develop young worker attitudes towards WHS, by engaging in and supporting workplace programs that aim to improve young worker safety. This can be supported through educating supervisors and co-workers on the unique risks faced by young workers, and the importance of modelling positive WHS work practices.



Experimenting with alcohol and other drugs is a part of many young people's lives. Young people (particularly adolescents) are susceptible to permanent damage from alcohol and other drug use when their brains are still developing. This makes them a vulnerable population.

Alcohol and other drugs, including prescription medication, can affect a person's health and ability to work safely. In the national drug strategy household survey**, almost 1 in 3 (31%) of people aged 18-24 had used illicit drugs in the last 12 months and 26% exceeded the 2020 alcohol guidelines. There are many ways to manage alcohol and other drugs at work. Workers and management should work together to reduce the risks associated with alcohol and other drugs at work.



**Source: Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.
National Drug Household Survey 2022-2023



Resource: Alcohol and other drugs

Alcohol and other drugs, including prescription medication, can affect a person's health and ability to work safely.

Impairment from alcohol and other drugs can be dangerous especially for people who operate or work around high risk plant and machinery or have a job that requires intense concentration and responsible decision making.



Resource: Energy drinks and worker health

Workers who consume energy drinks are at risk of health impacts that can directly affect their ability to safely perform physical tasks, safely operate plant and machinery, or increase their exposure to work hazards, which may cause accidents and injuries.

The use of energy drinks has significantly increased in recent years, particularly in male dominated industries such as construction, transport, agriculture, mining, and resources.



Supporting young workers checklist

Mind and Body



Complete the checklist to identify gaps and determine where you need to take action.

Groups	Reflections	Yes	No
Employers of young workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Do you use meetings, presentations, and other communication methods to raise workforce awareness of the unique risks faced by young workers?		
Education and training providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Do you consult with young workers and other workers to identify workplace hazards and risks, and to implement appropriate controls to manage these risks?		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Do you use meetings, presentations, and other communication methods to raise awareness among your teachers and trainers of the unique risks faces by young workers?		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Does the information you provide to your teachers and trainers include guidance on how young workers can maintain their own health, safety, and wellbeing at work?		
Parents and caregivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Do you have conversations with your child about why WHS is important?		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Do you speak with your child about how they can maintain their own health, safety, and wellbeing at work?		
Youth service providers, not-for-profit organisations, and government agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Do you help prepare young people for safe employment by communicating with your young people networks about why WHS is important (for example, by promoting WHS campaigns and sharing stories of injured workers) and what their WHS rights are?		



Our values and beliefs are often deeply ingrained and can be difficult to change. It is important to consider these qualities when educating your workforce, designing and planning work, and driving workplace culture initiatives that will influence and impact the WHS of young workers.

Education and learning

Educating young workers from the outset of their employment on the importance of WHS will help give them the knowledge and skills to identify and manage risks and keep safe at work.

Consider the following to keep young people safe at work:

- What skills do young workers need to be healthy and safe at work?
- How risk management components can be incorporated into existing education and training programs?
- What structured work experience will help develop young peoples' ability to identify and respond to WHS risks?

The ability to manage and speak-up about risks is an important skill for all workers, not just young workers. Risk management skills should be developed through formal and informal training, experience, feedback, and reflection.

Young people should be introduced to the risk management process as a normal business function during their education and induction at work, so they are prepared when they start work.

There are several ways young workers can develop their risk management capability. These include having conversations with their parents when starting their first job, through to formal risk management training.

By improving the capability of young workers to manage WHS risks, young workers will be more likely to:

- perceive risky/dangerous situations.
- avoid risk taking
- develop ideas on ways to work healthier and safer
- participate in routine WHS processes, procedures and activities at work
- support a culture that prioritises WHS.



Work experience is an opportunity for young workers interested in a vocational pathway to see what it's like, including how well WHS is managed in an industry/workplace.

Education and training providers should make sure that WHS risk management is embedded in all safety processes and procedures, and young workers are provided with ongoing training and opportunities to develop their skills in this regard.



Education and learning

Education and training programs

Increased year 12 completion rates and access education pathways has given young workers more opportunities to learn about WHS in preparation for when they start work.

Education and training programs include:

- school curriculum
- vocational education and training courses (e.g., certificates and diplomas)
- apprenticeships and traineeships
- university programs.

Work experience

Structured work experience gives young people an insight into a real workplace. It is a valuable opportunity for young people to apply the skills and knowledge they have developed throughout their education to practical work tasks, while under supervision, where possible by a competent industry professional.

Work experience provides young people with an insight into different jobs, which can help them

plan their career. It can help them understand workplace systems, processes, tasks, and expectations—including those related to WHS. This can help young people to recognise that WHS is important, particularly if the workplace has a strong health and safety culture and leadership.

Education pathways include work experience programs, ranging from short placements, to give high school students exposure to different jobs and industries, to longer placements and cadetships to enable vocational and university students to start applying their learned knowledge in a work environment.

Employers, businesses, or anyone who falls under the definition of a ‘person conducting a business or undertaking’ (a PCBU), all have legal obligations under work health and safety laws. Schools, Apprenticeships QLD, Registered Training Organisations and host employers, each have a responsibility to ensure proper systems are in place with effective supervision to ensure young workers are kept safe.

Resources



Training and supervision | [WorkSafe.qld.gov.au](https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au)

As an employer it's your responsibility to give your workers the information, training, and supervision they need to stay safe at work.



WorkSafe SmartMove – WHS training resource (safetyline.wa.gov.au)

WorkSafe SmartMove is a Work Health and Safety (WHS*) online educational program for senior high school students, young workers entering the workforce on work placement, work experience, or as school-based trainee/apprentice, and new workers entering the workforce for the first time. SmartMove is also designed for young people who are entering casual or part-time work on their free time and those who work on seasonal jobs.

Action:

- Integrate content into your school curriculum or training program content.
- Up-skill your workforce through a learning and development program.



Checklist

Education and learning



Complete the checklist to identify gaps in your approach and determine where to take action.

Groups	Reflections	Yes	No
Employers of young workers	• Can you identify any opportunities for more experienced workers to mentor/work alongside young workers when they first start working?		
	• Do you ensure WHS risk management is a key topic when employing and onboarding young workers, or hosting young people on work experience placements?		
Education and training providers	• Do you include WHS risk management in your learning outcomes?		
	• Do you integrate content relating to WHS risk management in your existing education and training programs?		
	• Do you provide opportunities for young people to apply their knowledge through on-the-job experience or work placements as part of your education and training programs?		
	• Do you assess these placements to ensure their WHS needs and learning objectives are being/were met?		
	• Do you undertake site assessments with the host employer to ensure that WHS specific risk management strategies are in place to protect young workers? Note: this applies to each provider in the chain of shared responsibility.		
Parents and caregivers	• Do you encourage your child to participate in work experience opportunities to gain exposure to real workplaces		
	• Do you share your own experience of identifying risks at work or home and having conversations about how to identify appropriate controls to improve health and safety and to speak up if they feel unsafe?		
Youth service providers, not-for-profit organisations, and government agencies	• Do you help prepare young people for safe employment by prioritising WHS risk management as a skill to improve employability?		

Good work design

Good work design considers the physical work environment, work roles, and tasks and the physical, emotional, and psychological wellbeing of all workers, including young workers. The way work is designed can have a significant impact on the safety of young workers.

Good work design should consider ways to make the workplace more inclusive to young workers. Work tasks should be designed in a way that develops their skills and experience, as well as protecting them from harm.

Three key aspects that contribute to good work design for young workers are:

- induction and training
- supervision and feedback
- support and mentoring.

Induction and training

When a young worker starts a new job or role, their supervisor needs to determine their level of experience in order to assess their competency to perform work safely.

This assessment can begin with talking to the young worker to develop an understanding of their formal education, training and prior work experience. However, it is not sufficient to rely on the young worker's assurance that they are experienced and competent. All young workers should complete an induction process to demonstrate their competence, and to receive the information and instructions they need to work in a healthy and safe way.



'Good work' is healthy and safe work where hazards and risks are removed or minimised and the wellbeing and job satisfaction of workers is prioritised.

Employers and supervisors need to design good work that:

- considers the risk profile of young workers
- takes into account their physical, emotional, and psychological capability
- provides supervision and feedback relative to the task, and
- supportive mentoring to improve WHS and wellbeing.



Video highlight: The right start - building safe work for young workers

As a supervisor or manager of a young worker, you have the greatest influence on their attitude to work safety. This means ensuring an appropriate level of supervision relevant to the tasks that they are performing. Watch the film to see two young workers going about their work day and how the interactions with their supervisors and their experiences can differ.



Good work design

General workplace induction	Task-specific induction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General overview of WHS legislation, including duties owed by different people. • Workplace policies, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ WHS ◦ code of conduct ◦ specific hazards (e.g., chemicals, manual tasks, dust/air borne contaminants and psychosocial) • Introduction to key people such I.e., supervisor, elected health and safety representatives (HSR), emergency team floor warden and first aid officer. • Expectations/how to report incidents, injuries, and near-misses. • Workers' compensation and return-to-work procedures. • Emergency procedures. • Safety signage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe work procedures. • The role of other workers when performing tasks (e.g., co-workers and spotters). • Expectations/instructions on how to use, maintain and report damaged equipment. • Use, storage, and maintenance of personal protective equipment (PPE). • Risk management registers outlining identified hazards and risk control measures. • Environmental conditions and variability (e.g., how to consider the impact of weather conditions).

Systems thinking for WHS and wellbeing

Incidents, injury, and illness rarely have a single cause - many factors in and outside the workplace often contribute to the cause. You need a range of controls and strategies to keep workers safe.

Systems thinking recognises the complex interrelationship of many factors that can contribute to an injury or illness. Systems thinking helps find the real risks so you can prevent harm or illness and create sustainable change to benefit your business.



Good work design

‘Tell me, show me, watch me.’

Supervisors and managers of young workers are encouraged to use the **‘Tell me, show me, watch me’** approach when undertaking task-specific inductions with young workers. This approach has three steps:



STEP 1: TELL ME

Provide a clear and detailed explanation of the task to the young worker, pay particular attention to critical elements and make the young worker aware of documented procedures.



STEP 1: SHOW ME

Demonstrate the task while the young worker watches, explain key points and ask the young worker questions to check for understanding at particular intervals.



STEP 1: WATCH ME

Review the young worker perform the task and provide clear and constructive feedback to ensure they perform the task correctly and safely.

Employers should carefully consider if the tasks given to young workers are suitable, based on their unique risk profile. Employers are responsible for determining what level of training is appropriate for the tasks that young workers will be expected to perform. Some tasks or equipment may require formal training. For training that occurs outside the workplace, supervisors should support the young worker by taking an interest in their training, assisting with training logs, and finding ways for them to apply new skills.

The intended outcome of training is to enhance the ability of workers to perform work in a healthy, safe, and productive way, while benefitting the organisation by developing an innovative and productive workforce.





Good work design

Supervision and feedback

Because young workers may have difficulty judging when something is dangerous, and have a desire to impress supervisors and workmates, they are less likely to ask questions or raise concerns about WHS. This means it isn't effective to simply rely on young workers to ask for assistance or supervision. Supervisors of young workers should always provide appropriate supervision.

Young workers may also work long hours, skip lunch breaks, consume high levels of energy drinks or caffeine, and do back-to-back shifts which can impact their health as well as raise their levels of physical and mental fatigue leading to increased health and safety risks.

The level of supervision required is based on the level of risk and the knowledge and experience of the young worker. For example, close and regular supervision is required for any task the young worker has no experience in, until the young worker becomes competent.

Supervisors and more experienced workers should be aware their own behaviours are being closely watched and modelled by young workers around them, and ensure their actions align with and support their communication to young workers.

Supervisors should allow adequate time to provide feedback to young workers. Feedback should be constructive and young workers should be encouraged to ask questions. Reward and recognition of a job well done is just as important as correcting errors.



Resource: Films for supervisors and managers of young workers

The film 'The right start - shaping a culture of safety for young workers' is designed for supervisors and managers, highlighting effective and ineffective examples of work design for young workers. It provides scenarios that follow two young workers during their day and highlights the difference between an effective and ineffective supervisor role. It also includes interviews with industry leaders on how they are actively engaging with their young workers to keep them safe today and develop them into future leaders in health and safety.



Action: Watch the film: [The right start - shaping a culture of safety for young workers | WorkSafe.qld.gov.au](https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au)

Good work design

Support and mentoring

Getting a job and starting work is an exciting time for a young person. Research shows that employment is good for their health, however, young people may need extra support to successfully transition to working life. Forming quality relationships with their supervisor and co-workers is vital for them to become socially engaged in their work environment. When young workers are engaged in their work environment, they are more likely to:

- pay attention to instructions and advice provided by their supervisor.
- share their ideas to improve the way work is conducted.
- ask questions, raise concerns, and report incidents.
- remain employed with the organisation.

Employers can support young workers in many ways. These activities don't necessarily have to be about WHS; however, they will often have a positive safety benefit. Effective forms of support an employer can provide include:

- structured mentoring – this involves an experienced co-worker forming a relationship with a young worker based on providing support, sharing their insights and experiences, and helping them to progress personally and professionally.
- life skills development – this can involve any kind of initiative such as structured training to help young workers with issues that may affect their performance at work (e.g., relationship skills, goal setting, financial skills, and physical and mental wellbeing)
- employee assistance service – this is a confidential and external counselling support service to maintain the wellbeing of workers.



Appropriate workplace behaviour

Young workers should expect that they will be treated appropriately at work by their co-workers. This means preventing all forms of workplace bullying, including acts of initiation or 'hazing.'

Similarly, the standard of workplace behaviour that young workers are expected to display should be clearly outlined and communicated to them as soon as they begin work.

Resource spotlight: Good Work Design Handbook

Well-designed work contributes to lower rates of WHS incidents as well as increased productivity and better business outcomes. Safe Work Australia have developed a handbook that provides guidance on good work design. It includes the ten principles relevant to any workplace, business, or industry. You can apply the principles when designing:

- structures, plant, and substances
- work, work processes and systems in general.



Find out more at: [Good work design | WorkSafe.qld.gov.au](https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au)



Checklist

Good work design



Complete the checklist to identify gaps in your approach and determine where to take action.

Groups	Reflections	Yes	No
Employers of young workers	Do you design work (in a way that manages WHS risks to young workers?)		
	Do you provide:		
	• a general workplace induction covering policies, procedures, and work environment.		
	• task-specific inductions incorporating the 'Tell me, show me, watch me' approach		
	• opportunities for formal and informal training		
	• appropriate supervision		
	• opportunities for effective young worker consultation		
	• regular constructive feedback		
	• mentoring from experienced and supportive co-workers		
Education and training providers	• other support mechanisms for young workers making the transition to working life.		
	Do you consider physical, biomechanical, cognitive, and psychosocial characteristics of work, together with the needs and capabilities of young workers?		
	Do you consult with the employers hosting your students to ensure adequate inductions, supervision, feedback, and mentoring are provided?		
Parents and caregivers	Do you ask your child about their workplace, including whether their employer:		
	• provides inductions and training		
	• maintains a healthy and safe environment and appropriate level of supervision		
	• listens and responds to any concerns they may have		
Youth service providers, not-for-profit organisations, and government agencies	• offers support and mentoring programs?		
	Mind and body Do you help prepare young people for safe employment by communicating with your young people networks about why WHS is important (for example, by promoting WHS campaigns and sharing stories of injured workers) and what their WHS rights are?		
	Education and learning Do you help prepare young people for safe employment by prioritising WHS risk management as a skill to improve employability?		

Workplace culture

While a positive workplace culture supports the WHS of all workers, it is particularly important for young workers as it helps them to:

- understand their WHS is valued.
- feel confident to report incidents and ask questions.
- shape a positive attitude towards WHS that will guide them throughout their career.

Workplace culture depends on the quality of relationships and communication between people. Three key aspects of workplace culture that influence the WHS of young workers are:

- organisational values
- leadership
- consultation and communication.

Organisational values

Most workplaces have a set of values or a mission statement that states the organisation's purpose and principles. Young workers will have their own personal values and beliefs. The alignment between the young worker's personal values and those of their employer will determine their level of engagement and involvement in WHS.

By understanding what drives and motivates young workers, employers can engage with them around WHS more effectively.



Why safety culture, climate and leadership is important

When safety leaders display a strong commitment to WHS, motivate staff and provide a positive example of safety, this will improve the **safety climate**.

If safety leaders continue these efforts over time, workers reassess and change their beliefs and values about safety, and this will improve the **safety culture** of an organisation.

An improved safety culture leads to improved worker **safety performance** and/or **safety behaviors**.



Workplace culture

The common values of today's generation of young people are shaped by shared experiences. When workplace culture promotes or embraces these values, young workers become more engaged, and contribute to increased participation and compliance with WHS processes, a positive workplace culture and better safety performance.

Common values of young people

Respect

Young people want their contributions and ideas to be valued. They want their workplace superiors to demonstrate leadership, not just exercise authority.

A sense of purpose

Young people are driven by a desire for their work to be meaningful and to make an impact. Young people are committed and motivated when they see the connection between their work and its broader purpose.

Connectedness

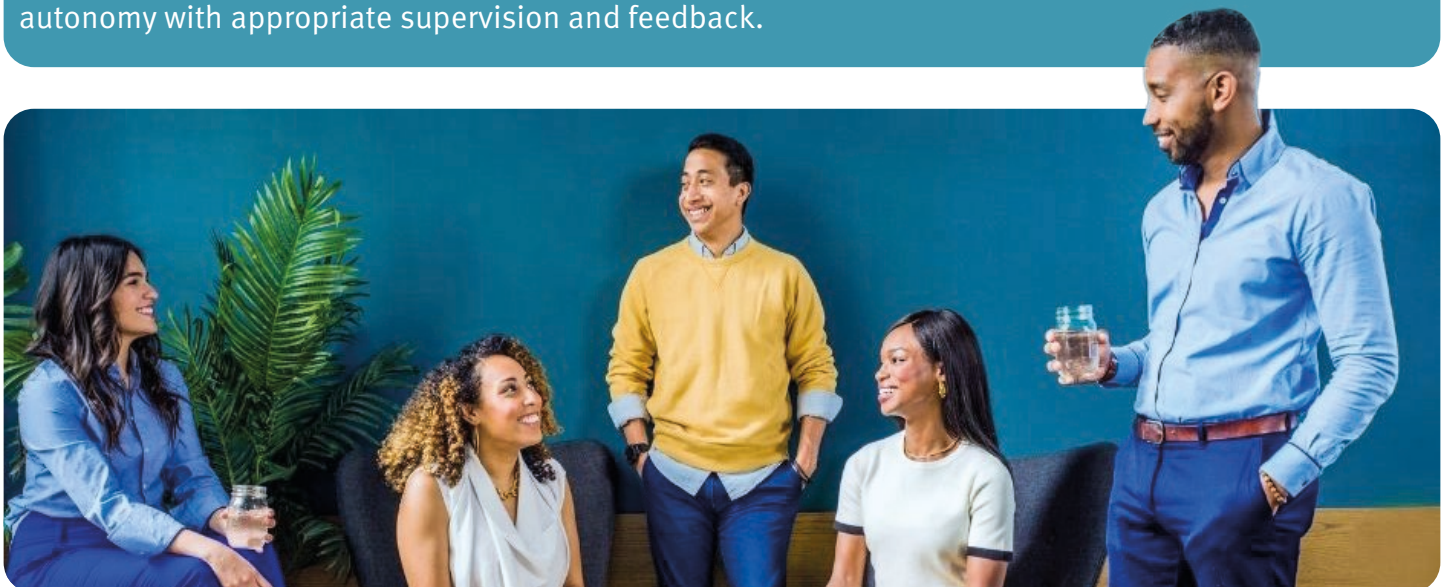
Young people rely on dynamic social networks to share information. They prioritise collaborating and communicating with their peers in their work environment.

Reward and recognition

More connected social environments means recognition amongst peers is vital for young people. Meaningful forms of recognition, such as training and development opportunities can be more important for young workers than financial reward.

Autonomy

Young people thrive when given opportunities for self-directed learning, application, and accountability. Effectively engaging young workers is achieved by balancing a healthy level of autonomy with appropriate supervision and feedback.





Workplace culture

When young workers see importance being placed on working safely, they are more likely to be motivated to follow safety procedures and raise safety issues.

Safety leadership principle	Example
Management commitment	All levels of management share a vision and show genuine interest and enthusiasm for workers' WHS and wellbeing.
Responsibility and accountability	People who play a direct role in keeping young workers safe have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities.
Quality communication	Communicating the importance of safety in different ways so everyone, especially young workers, can understand the message.
Resources and capability	Support young workers and their supervisors and managers by providing the tools and resources to perform work in a healthy and safe way. Incorporating the 'Tell me, show me, watch me' training approach to build capability and competence.
Reward and recognition	Recognise young workers who show initiative in relation to work health and safety by sharing their stories to inspire and educate their peers. Encourage reporting of incident and near-misses for future learnings
Involved employees	Involve young workers in discussions and decision-making to increase motivation to work safely. Consult with young workers as they may have new ideas or questions about how and why things are done a certain way.
Safety as a priority	Create a safety culture where young workers are: trained on safety procedures. involved in regular safety audits to identify potential hazards encouraged to report any unsafe conditions or practices.
Leadership style	Demonstrate strong safety leadership to set expectations and team direction when communicating safety objectives, targets, and purpose. Motivate and influence team members to achieve team and organisational goals. Provide opportunities for team members to achieve personal goals within their teams, thus ensuring motivation and ownership.



Workplace culture

Consultation and communication

Consulting with young workers about WHS helps to engage them in the decision-making process. Young workers are often able to apply their own unique and valuable perspective to solving WHS issues. Workplaces can demonstrate they value young workers' contributions by, for example, including them on a health and safety committee.

Using technology as a communication platform can be a powerful way to engage with young workers. While the method of communication is important, the content and style is critical to ensure that messages and instructions are clearly understood and responded to positively.

Common communication issues and possible solutions

Issue	Possible solutions
Difficulty understanding instructions for complex tasks or equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Involve young workers when reviewing or drafting documents.Consider the most appropriate communication method when providing instructions (e.g., verbal, written, images and/or physical demonstrations).Avoid making assumptions about prior knowledge.
Maintaining motivation and energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Approach each work task as an opportunity to learn and build experience, why a particular method is important, and not just what or how to do it.Be positive and encouraging when young workers voice an idea about safety.Consider the suitability of tasks given to a young worker— 'unwanted' jobs shouldn't just be left for a young worker.Undertake regular check-in meetings to review progress and set goals.
Using technology as a communication method	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Consider the value that technology can add to engaging with your workforce and align with young workers' existing use of technology (e.g., smartphones, social networking).Establish clear guidelines about appropriate use of technology.
Responding to mistakes made by a young worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Encourage reporting of incidents and near-misses by avoiding blame.Investigate how work is completed and how the work environment could be designed differently to eliminate or minimise risks.Invest time in giving positive feedback and debriefing.

Resource: Supervisor 'openness': The research study **Sometimes it hurts when supervisors don't listen** (Tucker S. & Turner N., Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 2014) found that young workers who voiced an idea about safety and were met with a negative response by their supervisor were more likely to suffer a future work-related injury.





Checklist

Workplace culture



Complete the checklist to identify gaps in your approach and determine where to take action.

Groups	Reflections	Yes	No
Employers of young workers	Do you maintain a good workplace culture that supports the WHS of young workers through:		
	• organisational values that reflect a commitment to young workers?		
	• strong WHS leadership demonstrated by supervisors and managers?		
	• effective consultation and communication methods?		
Parents and caregivers	• recognition of work health, safety, and wellbeing?		
	• Do you actively encourage your child to participate in WHS processes at their workplace?		
	• Do you encourage them to ask questions and speak up if they have concerns about their WHS?		

Resource spotlight



For more information about safety leadership behaviours and businesses practices that support a safety culture, visit the **Safety capability, leadership and culture** website.



Frequently asked questions

Why consider risks to young workers?

Young workers have characteristics that make them unique compared to other workforce age groups. Some of these characteristics make them more vulnerable to being injured at work. Understanding these characteristics can make it easier to engage young workers around WHS. This doesn't require bending the rules or having to baby-sit them – rather, it considers their needs, which leads to improved engagement, attitudes, and safety behaviours, and improved safety outcomes.

Won't young workers just grow out of their risk-taking behaviour?

Some characteristics of young workers, such as limited risk perception, will improve with the right work environment, mentoring and capability building. However, generational factors that shape many of their attitudes and behaviours, and their preferences for learning and communicating may remain throughout their lives.

What's the benefit of investing extra time engaging young workers in WHS?

Investing time in effective inductions and training, and appropriate supervision and support (including feedback and mentoring) will not only increase young worker levels of engagement at work, but can also decrease the likelihood of workers being injured. Employers may also benefit through a more productive workforce and lower workers' compensation costs.

How can I increase the confidence of a young worker to ask questions or raise concerns?

The most significant influence on whether a young worker feels confident to ask a question or raise a concern is the quality of the relationship they have with their direct supervisor.

However, supervisors should not rely on young workers to speak up about their safety concerns, as they will sometimes overestimate their own ability, or not recognise when a situation is unsafe. You can manage this risk by ensuring young workers are supervised, and understand what is required of them. You can check their understanding by asking them to explain a task in their own words.

What can I do if I don't have the resources to implement a program to improve the WHS of my young workers?

Young workers who have positive interactions with their supervisors are less likely to be injured at work. While formal training and development programs can be a good way to increase the skills of young workers, simple and inexpensive measures such as valuing young workers, open communication, regular feedback, and a commitment to learning should be the priority.

As a parent, how do I know whether my child's workplace is effectively managing WHS risks?

The best thing you can do to understand if/how your child's workplace is managing risks, is to have regular, open conversations with your child about their job. Try to establish an understanding of their work tasks, including their exposure to potentially dangerous situations or tasks such as machinery and equipment, working at heights, manual handling, and hazardous chemicals. Ask them about any incidents or near-misses that they have seen or heard about and their understanding of how these risks should be managed. Encourage and support your child to ask questions and raise concerns with their supervisor.



Take action



Using the information and tools in this toolkit, consider the steps you can take to support young workers to stay healthy and safe at work.

Reflect back on your answers throughout this toolkit and consider any 'No' responses. Add these to your action plan on the following page.

Employers of young workers	
Mind and Body <ul style="list-style-type: none">Do you use meetings, presentations, and other communication methods to raise workforce awareness of the unique risks faced by young workers?Do you consult with young workers and other workers to identify workplace hazards and risks, and to implement appropriate controls to manage these risks?	
Education and learning <ul style="list-style-type: none">Do you identify any opportunities for more experienced workers to mentor/work alongside young workers when they first start working?Do you ensure work health and safety risk management is a key topic when employing young workers or hosting young people on work experience placements?	
Work design <ul style="list-style-type: none">Do you design work (in a way that manages WHS risks to young workers?Do you provide:<ul style="list-style-type: none">a general workplace induction covering policies, procedures, and work environment.task-specific inductions incorporating the 'Tell me, show me, watch me' approachopportunities for formal and informal trainingappropriate supervisionopportunities for effective young worker consultationregular constructive feedbackmentoring from experienced and supportive co-workersother support mechanisms for young workers making the transition to working life.Do you consider the physical, biomechanical, cognitive, and psychosocial characteristics of work, together with the needs and capabilities of young workers?	
Workplace culture <p>Do you maintain a good workplace culture that supports the WHS of young workers through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">organisational values that reflect a commitment to young workers?strong WHS leadership demonstrated by supervisors and managers?effective consultation and communication methods?Recognition of work health, safety, and wellbeing?	

Youth service providers, not-for-profit organisations and government agencies	
Mind and Body <ul style="list-style-type: none">Do you help prepare young people for safe employment by communicating with your young people networks about why WHS is important (for example, by promoting WHS campaigns and sharing stories of injured workers) and what their WHS rights are?	
Education and learning <ul style="list-style-type: none">Do you help prepare young people for safe employment by prioritising WHS risk management as a skill to improve employability?	

Parents and caregivers	
Mind and Body <ul style="list-style-type: none">Do you have conversations with your child about why WHS is important?Do you speak with your child about how they can maintain their own health, safety, and wellbeing at work?	
Education and learning <ul style="list-style-type: none">Do you encourage your child to participate in work experience opportunities to gain exposure to real workplaces?Do you share your own experience of identifying risks at work or home and having conversations about how to identify appropriate controls to improve health and safety and to speak up if they feel unsafe?	
Work design <p>Do you ask your child about their workplace, including whether their employer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">provides inductions and training.maintains a healthy and safe environment and appropriate level of supervision.listens and responds to any concerns they may have.offers support and mentoring programs.	
Workplace culture <ul style="list-style-type: none">Do you actively encourage your child to participate in the work health and safety processes within their workplace?Do you encourage them to ask questions and speak up if they have concerns about their health and safety?	

Education and training providers	
Mind and Body <ul style="list-style-type: none">Do you use meetings, presentations, and other communication methods to raise awareness among your teachers and trainers of the unique risks faces by young workers?Does the information you provide to your teachers and trainers include guidance on how young workers can maintain their own health, safety, and wellbeing at work?	
Education and learning <ul style="list-style-type: none">Do you include WHS risk management in your learning outcomes?Do you integrate content relating to WHS risk management in your existing education and training programs?Do you provide opportunities for young people to apply their knowledge through on-the-job experience or work placements as part of your education and training programs?	
Work design <ul style="list-style-type: none">Do you consult with the employers hosting your students to ensure adequate inductions, supervision, feedback, and mentoring are provided?	



You may need to work with others to implement some of these actions.



Your action plan



Your actions	Review date
Mind and body	
Education and learning	
Good work design	
Workplace culture	



Resources

Personal story films



Jason's Story

Michael's son Jason was just 20 years old when he was electrocuted at a construction site in Clermont in 2012. He had only been working there for nine days.



I love you, Dad – The Dale Kennedy story

Debbie and Dan are Workplace Health and Safety Queensland Safety Advocates.

Their son Dale was working in a ceiling space when he died from an electric shock. Dale was only 20 and close to finishing his electrical apprenticeship. He was also a young father himself.

Debbie and Dan share their story to encourage workers (especially young workers), to voice their concerns if they see something that is unsafe, and to always turn the power off before working in a ceiling space.

"If you have been asked to do something unsafe just say no, it's not worth it. You're a stronger person if you stand up for your own safety, we want you to go home at the end of the day to your loved ones."



Jason Daniels' story – surviving an electric shock from overhead powerlines

Jason Daniels' story – surviving an electric shock from overhead powerlines, is a film about how quickly life changed for Jason's family when the grain auger he was moving contacted an overhead powerline.

Jason was just 17 when the serious electric shock he received from the powerline gave him horrific injuries. Jason's mother Di Daniels recalls the devastating phone call she received on the day it happened and the struggles they have faced throughout Jason's recovery.

Jason and Di are sharing their experience in this raw and real film to raise awareness about having a safe system of work in place before starting work and urging employers to listen when young workers speak up with safety concerns.

'Life can change in a heartbeat' - Di Daniels.

Instructional films



The right start – shaping a culture of safety for young workers | [WorkSafe.qld.gov.au](https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au)

This film highlights the key considerations for supervisors and managers in supporting young people to stay safe at work.

The film follows two young workers throughout their workday to demonstrate how important supervisors and managers are in designing good work and keeping young workers safe. The scenarios highlight the difference between an effective and an ineffective supervisor by showing the interactions between a supervisor and a young worker in different industry settings.



The right start - building safe work for young workers

As a supervisor or manager of a young worker, you have the greatest influence on their attitude to work safety. This means ensuring an appropriate level of supervision relevant to the tasks that they are performing. Watch the film to see two young workers in the Construction industry go about their work day and how the interactions with their supervisors and their experiences can differ.

Resources

Presentations and Webinars



Good work design for young workers - a workshop for supervisors/managers

This webinar aims to raise awareness of the unique risk profile of young workers and generate discussion about how you can make your workplace safer for young workers.



An introduction to risk at work - for young workers

This presentation aims to start a conversation with young workers about WHS risk management and build young workers' confidence in asking questions and raising safety concerns.

The presentation template includes presentation slides and speaker notes for an interactive workshop session for supervisors and managers of young workers.

Education and training resources



Mind and Body | Obligations for parents and employers of working children

Information on employer and parent obligations of working children.



Know Your Workplace Rights

Your quick reference guide to entering the workforce.



Training and supervision | [WorkSafe.qld.gov.au](https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au)

As an employer, it's your responsibility to give your workers the information, training, and supervision they need to stay safe at work.



SmartMove

A comprehensive WHS resource for senior high school students and young workers entering the workforce on a work placement, work experience or as a school-based trainee/apprentice. It includes modules incorporating videos, online learning activities and printable worksheets, mapping, and assessment tools for the national competency unit BSBWHS201A: Contribute to health and safety of self and others, and printable lesson plans and worksheets for educators.



Alcohol and other drugs

Alcohol and other drugs, including prescription medication, can affect a person's health and ability to work safely.



Energy drinks and worker health

Workers who consume energy drinks are at risk of health impacts which can directly affect their ability to safely perform physical tasks, safely operate plant and machinery or increase their exposure to work hazards which may cause accidents and injuries.

Resources



Good Work Design Handbook

Well-designed work contributes to lower rates of WHS incidents as well as increased productivity and better business outcomes. Find out more at: [Good work design | WorkSafe.qld.gov.au](https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/good-work-design)



Systems thinking for health, safety, and wellbeing

Incidents, injury, and illness rarely have a single cause - many factors, in and outside the workplace often contribute to the cause. You need a range of controls and strategies to keep workers safe.

Systems thinking recognises the complex interrelationship of many factors that can contribute to an injury or illness. Systems thinking helps find the real risks so you can prevent harm or illness, create sustainable change and benefit business.



Building Stronger Teams - Supporting Effective Team Leaders

This resource can help you engage and communicate effectively with workers on work WHS issues and provide support during recovery and return to work (RTW).



Mentally healthy workplaces toolkit

This toolkit provides practical tools and resources that employers, managers and leaders can use to create and maintain mentally healthy workplaces. You can use the guidance material and practical tools in this toolkit to facilitate positive steps towards a mentally healthy workplace.



Networks and programs



Safety capability, leadership, and culture

Taking positive action to improve your processes and structures, leadership and teamwork, and skills and motivation. This will strengthen your ability to respond to risks and challenges in the modern work environment.



News & events | [WorkSafe.qld.gov.au](https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au)

