

New A Level
Economics

Labour
Markets

citizens advice bureau

Teacher Instructions

This resource introduces students to some key legislation and regulation in the UK labour market. The resource contains 12 “Citizen Concern Cards”, each containing a short scenario and a question on which someone may approach their local Citizen’s Advice Bureau (CAB) for advice. The resource also contains some cards, each of which outlines key points in relevant UK labour market legislation.

There are a number of ways to use this resource.

- 1** Role play – allocate up to 12 students to be “concerned citizens”, and issue them with at least 1 “concern” card; the remainder of your students should be “volunteers at the CAB”, and should be issued with the legislation cards. The concerned citizens should discuss their issue with a CAB volunteer to establish whether their concern is legitimate or not.
- 2** Writing exercise – allocate students a number of “concern” cards along with all the legislation cards. Students should write a short Agony Aunt style reply to each concern, making sure to include details of the relevant law(s) and advice on how to tackle the issue.
- 3** Matching exercise – working individually or in pairs, students should match the legislation cards to any relevant concern cards



concerned
citizens

My employer has told me that if I want to keep my job then I need to work through my weekends and get one day off every two weeks. Is she allowed to do this?

Barry, delivery deliver

concerned
citizens

I am expecting my first baby in a few weeks' time. I earn much more than my husband so it makes sense for me to go back to work while he looks after the baby. Am I allowed to do this, and when can I go back to work?

Phoebe, bank manager

concerned
citizens

I am a teacher and am not a member of a trade union. Nearly all my colleagues are union members, and have voted to strike next week – I'm worried about their reaction if I don't strike. What shall I do?

Martin, maths teacher

concerned
citizens

I've been working for a temping agency for a couple of years, and about 6 months ago they found me a long-term contract with an insurance company. I just found out I get paid less than the company employees, being an agency worker. Is this legal, and what are my rights?

Shazia, data entry clerk

concerned
citizens

I work part-time in my local supermarket, so that I can fit in the hours around doing the school run. My full-time colleagues get paid more per hour than I do. Is this fair?

Meggie, checkout operator

concerned
citizens

Me and my colleagues at the fire station are annoyed about changes to our pensions – we want to go on strike next week. Are we allowed to do that?

Laura, firefighter

concerned
citizens

I am 21 years old, and work part-time as a waitress while I finish my degree; the restaurant pays me £5 per hour, but says I can keep all my tips. Shouldn't I be paid the minimum wage?

Lana, waitress and student

concerned
citizens

I have worked for my employer for 2 years, and informed them 5 months ago that I would need to take maternity leave in a few weeks time. They have agreed to pay me 50% of my pay for the first 4 weeks of my leave, but nothing after that. I want to take a year off. Have they followed the law?

Cherie, librarian

concerned
citizens

I am a single dad to three children, and it is tricky managing work and the school run and all their after school activities. I have requested flexible working from my employer, but they have said no. I thought they had to say yes. Who is right?

Amir, architect

concerned
citizens

My employer has just signed me up to a Workplace Pension, which means I need to pay a bit of my monthly salary into the scheme. I don't want to pay into the pension because I don't think I can afford it. Am I allowed to stop my payments?

Elsie, graphic designer

concerned
citizens

I am 45 years old and work for a toy store; because more people shop online now, my employer has told me that I am being made redundant. I've worked for the store for 5 years, and I am told that my redundancy pay will be equivalent to 8 weeks pay. This doesn't sound like much – is it correct?

Colleen, retail assistant

concerned
citizens

My son has applied to do a paper round with the local newsagent. The manager wants him to deliver newspapers from 6am to 8am on weekdays, and says he can't have the job unless he is willing to work every day during school holidays. This sounds a bit Victorian to me! What are my son's rights?

Michaela, concerned parent

legal
advice

Equality Act 2010

- Aim of the Act is to improve equal job opportunities and fairness for employees and job applicants – it implements 4 EU Directives into UK law
- The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against people at work as a result of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage / civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation
- Men and women in part-time and full-time employment have the right to equal pay
- The Act replaced the Equal Pay Act 1970, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1996

Employment Rights Act 1996

- Aim of the Act was to “consolidate” employment rights into one Act – it built on previous Acts including the Contracts of Employment Act 1963, the Redundancy Payments Act 1965, the Employment Protection Act 1975 and the Wages Act 1986
- The key areas dealt with by the Act include unfair dismissal, time-off rights for parenting and redundancy issues
- The Act allows paid time off work to perform public duties such as jury duty, and also to attend ante-natal appointments, and training courses
- The Act says that employees must get a minimum one week notice from an employer if they are to be dismissed, which rises to 2 weeks if they have worked there for 2 years, 3 weeks for 3 years, up to a maximum of 12 weeks
- The Act makes it unlawful for employees to be “unfairly dismissed”
- The Act gives rights to employees for redundancy payments, which are based on length of service with an employer and your age. For example, for each year worked under the age of 21 you receive half a week’s pay, between 21 and 40 you receive one week’s pay, and over 40 you receive 1.5 week’s pay. The maximum weekly pay is currently capped at £450

Agency Workers Regulations 2010

- The Aim of these Regulations is to prevent agency workers from being discriminated against or treated differently to regular employees, in terms of pay, sick pay, working hours, working conditions, and holiday entitlements
- It puts the EU Temporary and Agency Workers Directive into UK law
- This Act works in conjunction with the Employment Agencies Act 1973, which prevents agencies from charging upfront fees to their agency workers and from advertising jobs that don’t actually exist
- Under the law, agency workers are entitled to the same pay and conditions as regular employees once they have worked for a particular employer for at least 12 weeks

Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992

- This Act defines what is meant by a Trade Union, protects the rights of workers who join or leave a union, outline the process by which Unions can use collective bargaining, and protects the rights of unionised workers to take “action” such as strikes
- The Act makes it unlawful for union representatives not to be elected, and states that union members must ballot / vote for a strike; members must know about a ballot at least 7 days ahead, and if enough members vote “yes” to industrial action then that action must take place within 4 weeks of the vote
- The Act bans closed shop agreements
- The Act notes that collective agreements are only legally enforceable if they are in writing
- The Act requires employers to consult with unions if there are likely to be redundancies

The Flexible Working Regulations 2014

- These regulations provide further depth and detail to the Employment Rights Act 1996
- Until these regulations were introduced, only parents of children under the age of 17, or parents of disabled children, or carers to adults, were allowed to request flexible working. The regulations now allows any employee to request flexible working, if they have worked for an employer for over 26 weeks, or are an agency worker.
- Employees may only ask employers for flexible working once every 12 months
- Business managers can refuse flexible working requests if there are good business reasons to do so, for example: the additional cost to the business would be too high, it would not be possible to reorganise work between other employees, the change may have a detrimental impact on quality, the business would be unable to meet customer demand and so on
- Flexible working means a way of working that suits an employee’s needs, for example, different start and finish times, home-working, job-sharing, flexi-time, compressed hours etc

Pensions Act 2008

- The Act requires all businesses, regardless of size, to offer a company pension scheme to their employees, or enrol their staff in the National Employment Savings Trust (NEST)
- The Act requires automatic enrolment of all staff into either a company pension scheme or NEST – all companies will have to meet these legal requirements by September 2016, except for employees under the age of 21, and those earning less than £112 per week
- Employers are also required to make contributions to the scheme, rising to 3% of income by 2018
- Employees have the right to opt-out of the pension scheme, but will be re-enrolled by their employer after 3 years

Working Time Regulations 1998

- These Regulations turn the EU Working Time Directive into UK law
- The regulations limit the number of hours worked per week to 48 (in many cases this is averaged out over the course of 17 weeks), although workers can “opt out” – workers cannot be forced to “opt out” by being threatened with dismissal
- Paid annual leave of 28 working days (not including Bank Holidays)
- 11 consecutive hours rest in every 24 hour period
- One day off per week, or two days every fortnight if one day off per week is not possible
- Night workers cannot average more than 8 hours per night
- An additional 2015 ruling on this noted that mobile workers (e.g. carers) must include the travel time to and from their last appointments as work time

Employment Rights Act – specialist maternity and paternity provisions

- Pregnant employees have the right to 52 weeks of maternity leave, and they can be paid for 39 weeks of that (first 6 weeks on 90% pay, and the remainder on Statutory Maternity Pay, currently £139.58). New mothers must take 2 weeks off work after birth (or 4 weeks if working in a factory)
- The employee has the right to return to an identical job or suitable alternative
- The employee must notify an employer that she is pregnant on or before 25 weeks of pregnancy
- Shared Parental Leave came into force on Dec 1st 2014, and allows mothers and fathers to share the parental leave at any time – previously, this could only be shared once the child was 20 weeks old. Employers cannot refuse Shared Parental Leave, but can refuse it if it is not in consecutive chunks
- Fathers are entitled to 2 consecutive weeks paternity leave within 56 days of their child being born

National Minimum Wage Act 1998

- The National Minimum Wage in the UK took effect on January 1st 1999, and the rates are reviewed every year by the Low Pay Commission
- These are the rates for the 2015/2016 year: £6.50ph for over 21s, £5.13ph for 18 – 21 year olds, £3.79ph for under 18s no longer in compulsory education, £2.73 for apprentices
- From April 2016, the new Living Wage will be introduced, at £7.20ph for people over the age of 25
- The NMW applies to anyone who has a contract, and also agency workers
- In October 2013 the law was amended so that employers not paying the NMW could be publicly “named and shamed”
- Tips do not count towards the NMW, although workers still must pay tax on them

The Children and Young Person's Act 1933

- Children under the age of 14 cannot be employed, except in specific circumstances such as modelling, film / TV / theatre, and sport, for example, but then only with a special license. Some local authorities have by-laws which allow 13 year olds to have a paper round.
- A child may not be employed for more than 2 hours on a day on which they must go to school
- A child may not be employed before 7am or after 7pm
- A child under the school leaving age must have at least 2 weeks holiday from work in a school holiday
- On a paper round, children must carry no more than 9kg