



Cymru Iach ar Waith
Healthy Working Wales

Thriving at Work

A YOUNG PERSON'S GUIDE



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INTRODUCTION

YOU'VE LANDED A JOB – CONGRATULATIONS!

Your journey into work is just beginning and there will be plenty of opportunities to grow and succeed. Starting work is exciting, but it can also feel like a big change. Education is structured and familiar; work can feel very different at first.

This guide was developed with young people and employers to reflect the real experiences and challenges faced by people entering work today. It draws on research, workshops and surveys to ensure the advice is practical, relevant and grounded in lived experience.

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¹ Young people still face unequal access to careers advice and work experience –
BDO UK, MARCH 2026

**AROUND 60% OF
YOUNG PEOPLE SAY
THEY FEEL UNPREPARED
FOR EMPLOYMENT¹.
SO IF YOU FEEL UNSURE
OR OVERWHELMED,
THIS IS VERY
COMMON.**

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STARTING WORK

ENTRY-LEVEL ROLES ARE DESIGNED FOR LEARNING

You may be:

- Completing routine or repetitive tasks
- Learning new systems that could feel confusing at first
- Building confidence through practice
- Asking lots of questions

**THINK OF THIS STAGE
AS A FOUNDATION
FOR YOUR FUTURE.**

COMMON EXPERIENCES

There are many things you may feel or experience when you start working, but rest assured you won't be the first.

You might feel:

- **Out of your depth** – others may seem confident, but they are still learning too
- **Unsure about your future** – clarity often comes with experience
- **Nervous about communication** – this is very common
- **Challenged by new routines** – adjusting takes time
- **Aware of stress** – learning to manage this is part of working life

YOUR FIRST WEEK CHECKLIST

- Introduce yourself to colleagues
- Learn key systems and processes
- Understand your role and responsibilities
- Ask for help when unsure
- Observe how your team works



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UNDERSTANDING WORKPLACE CULTURE

WORK CULTURE IS SIMPLY 'HOW THINGS ARE DONE' IN AN ORGANISATION.

Some aspects are written, but many are not, such as:

- Communication styles
- Meeting behaviours
- How feedback is given
- Expectations around work and behaviour

These unwritten ways of working can take time to understand, and that's completely normal. And you don't need to get everything right straightaway. Learning how to navigate work culture is a process, and every experience helps you build that understanding.

TIPS FOR UNDERSTANDING CULTURE

- Observe how others work and interact
- Ask simple questions like: "How is this usually done?"
- Be adaptable to different environments
- Accept that mistakes are part of learning



REMEMBER:
THE MORE YOU
OBSERVE, ASK AND
REFLECT, THE MORE
CONFIDENT AND
CAPABLE YOU'LL
BECOME.

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WORKING WITH OTHERS

Building positive relationships and working well with others are key to thriving at work. Strong work relationships can boost your confidence, support your wellbeing and help you grow in your career.

Many young workers report feeling lonely or isolated at work, especially in hybrid or remote roles. Others experience assumptions or stereotypes because of their age or another characteristic. Relationships take time, and it's normal if you don't feel fully settled straightaway.

REMEMBER:
EVEN SMALL
ACTIONS CAN HELP
CREATE A SENSE
OF CONNECTION.

CREATING A SENSE OF BELONGING

Belonging is the feeling that you are accepted, valued and able to be yourself at work.

This doesn't always happen instantly, but there are ways to help it develop:

- Being open to getting involved
- Finding shared interests or common ground
- Participating in team activities or discussions
- Being yourself – authentically and professionally

EMPLOYERS THAT PRIORITISE EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION OFTEN CREATE STRONGER ENVIRONMENTS FOR BELONGING. BUT INDIVIDUALS PLAY A ROLE IN SHAPING THAT, TOO.

TIPS FOR BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

- Say hello and engage in small conversations
- Show interest in others (ask questions, listen actively)
- Be reliable – people trust those who follow through
- Offer help when you can



UNDERSTANDING ROLES

Most workplaces have different levels of responsibility and decision-making:

- **Peers** – colleagues at your level
- **Managers** – oversee work and support teams
- **Senior staff** – more experience and responsibility

KNOWING THE LEVEL OF RESPONSIBILITY HELPS YOU UNDERSTAND WHO TO GO TO AND HOW TO COMMUNICATE.

BUILDING VALUABLE 'SOFT SKILLS'

Qualifications and technical skills may be important in your role. But employers consistently say that, for entry-level jobs, how you work with others matters just as much as (if not more than) what you know.

Skills like communication, teamwork and resilience to challenges are often what make the difference between someone who just does the job and someone who thrives in it.

IMPORTANT SKILLS:

1. COMMUNICATION
2. TEAMWORK
3. RESILIENCE

Communication

Good communication means being clear and respectful.

One-to-one:

- Speak clearly
- Take notes if needed
- Pause and think before responding

Meetings:

- Listen actively
- Contribute when you can
- Ask questions if something isn't clear

Teamwork

Work brings together people with different personalities, experiences and perspectives. You may be working alongside people who you feel are very different to you but who you'll need to get along with.

Being a good team player is one of the most valuable skills you can develop. But what does good teamwork look like in practice?

- Be dependable
- Respect different views
- Share information
- Support colleagues

Asking questions without fear

Asking questions shows you want to learn and do the job well, so don't be afraid to ask them. Not asking questions can slow your progress or lead to mistakes.

TIPS FOR ASKING QUESTIONS:

- Be specific
- Show what you've already tried
- Choose a good moment



Handling challenges

1 CONFLICT

At some point, you'll disagree with someone at work. That's normal. What matters is how you handle it.

Don't:

- Ignore the problem
- Gossip or complain to others
- Let frustration build up over time

Do:

- Stay calm
- Focus on the issue
- Listen and find solutions

2 MISTAKES

Everyone makes mistakes at work, even the most experienced people. How you respond is what really matters.

- Be honest
- Focus on fixing the issue
- Learn from it

3 FEEDBACK

Remember that feedback is information, not a personal attack. It should really help you develop as an employee.

Good employers are skilled at giving feedback that's clear and constructive, meaning you know exactly what to work on to improve.

- Listen openly
- Ask questions
- Use it to improve

**FEEDBACK IS HOW YOU
LEARN AND IMPROVE,
BUT IT CAN FEEL
UNCOMFORTABLE
TO HEAR.**

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WELLBEING AT WORK

HEALTHY HABITS

- Set realistic expectations – you are learning
- Take regular breaks
- Stay organised
- Maintain a routine

REMEMBER:
LOOKING AFTER
YOUR WELLBEING IS
ESSENTIAL TO
SUSTAINING YOUR
PERFORMANCE
AND ENJOYMENT
AT WORK.

IMPOSTER FEELINGS

Feeling like you don't belong is common, especially early on.

Ways to manage it:

- Remember you were hired for a reason
- Track your progress
- Talk to others
- Accept that learning takes time

MANAGING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Overall, work is great for both our physical and mental health. It can give us a sense of purpose, belonging, social connections, financial security, identity and positive achievements.

However, if you become overwhelmed, stressed, disconnected or feel constantly under pressure, these can have a negative impact on your mental health and wellbeing.

Feeling this way for a prolonged period can lead to sickness and burnout.

TIPS FOR WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING:

- Make time for rest and activities outside work
- Talk to someone you trust for support
- Avoid taking on too much
- Set clear boundaries
- Break tasks into smaller steps
- Be kind to yourself and others
- Move your body regularly, and take breaks outdoors when you can



SIGNS YOU MAY BE STRESSED

- Feeling overwhelmed
- Difficulty concentrating
- Trouble switching off
- Changes in sleep or appetite

REMEMBER:
MAKE TIME FOR
REST AND
ACTIVITIES
OUTSIDE WORK

Support in work:

- **Your employer's wellbeing policy** – sets out the steps that should be taken
- **Mental Health First Aiders** – trained colleagues you can talk to
- **Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs)** – confidential advice and counselling
- **Occupational health services** – help ensure you're safe and well at work
- **Healthy Working Wales Mental Health and Wellbeing information**
- **Hapus website**
- **In-Work Support Service**

FIND OUT WHAT YOUR WORK OFFERS. SAVE KEY CONTACT DETAILS AND USE SUPPORT EARLY – DON'T WAIT UNTIL THINGS FEEL OVERWHELMING.

FINANCIAL WELLBEING

Worrying about money can affect how you feel. It can make it harder to focus, make decisions and look after your wellbeing.

Simple steps to try:

- Know how much money you earn and spend
- Make a simple budget (plan where your money goes)
- Try to save a little, even if it's a small amount
- Understand your job (your contract, hours, and rights)

REMEMBER:
TAKING SMALL
STEPS CAN HELP
YOU FEEL MORE
IN CONTROL.

> Visit the Healthy Working Wales [financial wellbeing webpages](#) for support.

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KNOWING YOUR RIGHTS AT WORK

You have the right to fair treatment and clear expectations.

When you start work, you should receive:

- A contract or written terms
- Details of pay, hours and responsibilities

Key rights include:

- Fair work
- Fair pay (minimum wage)
- Rest breaks and working time limits
- Paid holiday

PROTECTION FROM DISCRIMINATION

You should not be treated unfairly because of:

- Age
- Race
- Disability
- Religion or belief
- Sex or sexual orientation

**REMEMBER:
IF SOMETHING
FEELS WRONG,
TAKE IT SERIOUSLY
AND SEEK
SUPPORT.**

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CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND CONFIDENCE

Career development takes time, and you play an active role in shaping it.

SETTING GOALS

Start simple:

- What skills do you want to build?
- What work do you enjoy?

Focus on short-term goals such as:

- Learning something new
- Taking on responsibility

SEEKING OPPORTUNITIES

You may need to ask for development opportunities:

- Training or courses
- New tasks or projects
- Shadowing colleagues

REMEMBER:
SHOWING
INITIATIVE
DEMONSTRATES
MOTIVATION.

TRACKING PROGRESS

Keep a record of:

- Achievements
- Feedback
- Skills developed

This helps you:

- Build confidence
- Prepare for reviews
- Show your progress

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FINAL THOUGHTS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Starting work can feel uncertain, but it's also full of opportunity. You don't need to have everything figured out. Focus on learning, building relationships and taking small steps forward.

> For further advice and resources, visit the [Healthy Working Wales young employees in the workplace webpages](#).

Healthy Working Wales would like to thank all of the young people, employers and Public Health Wales staff who contributed to the workshops and surveys, roundtable discussions and evidence reviews that led to this guide being produced – without your input, we could not have had authentic insights into the challenges facing young workers today.

**WITH TIME, EFFORT
AND SUPPORT,
YOU CAN THRIVE
AT WORK.**



We would also like to acknowledge the work of RCS in conducting the workshops and surveys and producing the content for this guide.

Mae'r canllaw hon ar gael yn Gymraeg hefyd.
This guide is also available in Welsh.

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