



## Discriminated Against by Law

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Laws are supposed to protect us at work. Wherever you come from, whoever you love, no matter your age, your gender or your ability. You are entitled to be treated equally by your employer and to be free from discrimination.

That's what the law says, right? Unfortunately not.

The Equality Act was brought in in 2010 to prevent people being discriminated against on the basis of their identity, and covers; age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

If you identify with one of these, you will know what happens in reality is much different, but at least if we are treated unfairly whilst at work we have some recourse to justice by the laws in place. As union members, we are also more informed of our rights and aware that we have support if our employer acts badly. Yet there is one group that a lot of people expect to be exploited.

Young Workers.

You may or may not know you have to work somewhere two years before you can be unfairly dismissed. Young workers are often put on short term or zero hours contracts to prevent them

accessing the same terms & conditions and recourse to justice that older established worker have.

The government also allows employers legally to pay young workers less for doing the same job as older workers. One man once said to me 'Well, why shouldn't young workers be paid less, they don't know as much, they need training, they are just starting out'.

If someone has worked at a store since they were 16 and they are now 24, why should a 25 year old walk in on day one and be entitled to more money than them? Rewarding someone for expertise is one thing, assuming a lack of ability in younger people is discriminatory.

Employers can pay less because they are offering a training opportunity, by the way of an apprenticeship. As a former apprentice, I earned about £3 an hour, but I worked got decent training and offered a job at the local council at the end. When Subway are were offering an apprentice wage for 'Apprentice Sandwich Artists' it's clear not all employers are using apprenticeships to offer development opportunities, but instead to keep thier wage bill down.

Young workers may in theory have protection from age discrimination, but that's not the case with certain employers who put people before profit. The only way for young workers to protect themselves is by sticking with good colleagues, understanding their rights and having the protection of a good trade union.

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