

9. Child labour

The issue

According to the International Labour Organisation there are currently approximately 200 million child labourers in the world, and 100 million are suffering in the worst forms of child labour like mining and agriculture where the risk to their health is high.

Some young workers are below the age of 5, but all workers between the ages of 5-15 are generally defined as child labourers.

The Kingfisher Standard

The factory only employs workers who are over the local legal minimum age. Where this is less than 15, or where there is no legal minimum age, workers should not be less than 15 years old.

Kingfisher believes that “child” means anyone under fifteen years of age, unless national or local law stipulates a higher mandatory school leaving or minimum working age, in which case the higher age shall apply; and “child labour” means any work by a child or young person, unless it is considered

acceptable under the ILO Minimum Age Convention 1973 (C138) Article 4.

Additionally young workers between the ages of 15-18 are in most countries given additional protection in the form of work that they can and cannot do. For example most countries prohibit these young people from doing any work that is deemed to be hazardous to their health – and often additionally restrict their working hours and prevent night time working (see below for more information).

Kingfisher expects that factories should keep accurate records of the ages of all workers and should keep a list of young workers (under 18).

How can I check that there are no children in my supply chain?

Kingfisher believes that children should have the opportunity to grow up in a healthy and safe environment with the opportunity for an education, and expect that factories should take all necessary action to ensure the required standards are met. This will require factories **to collect and keep on record**, documentation verifying the age of all workers, and a list of all workers under 18:

In China this may be:

- National Identity Card

In India this may be:

- Ration Card, School Leaving Certificate, Voters Identity Card, Certificate from Certifying surgeon or Dentists certificate

In Western Europe this may be:

- Identity Card, Passport, or National Insurance Card

Other Options:

- Birth Certificate
- Letter from Village Headman
- Dental X-rays

Note that you must check for fraudulent or forged documents and that no original papers must be held by the employer.

What should I do if I find a child in one of my factories?

If you find or suspect children are working in any of your worksites, **the interests of the child must be considered first and so it is vital that the child is NOT summarily dismissed.**

We will work with the vendor or factory to agree an appropriate course of action that protects the child.

If you find children either in your workplace or in the factory of a vendor or sub-contractor please contact the operating company that purchases your products immediately.

We do not expect factories to take any action regarding child workers without discussing it with us first. However, if

there is an imminent risk of injury to the child, an appropriate solution must be put in place immediately, which may include for example sending the child home on full pay or moving to lighter duties; other longer term solutions will then be agreed.

What definitely doesn't work?

- Dismissing the child and ejecting them from the factory and/or accommodation.
- Giving a lump sum of money to parents for dismissing the child to help the family finances.
- Threatening the employer with termination of contracts.

Why these actions don't work

- Dismissing the child abruptly from the production process may force them into a more precarious situation:
 - the child becomes unemployed and has no money
 - unemployed status make the child more vulnerable
 - child may opt for employment in other establishments
- child may end up working for a less scrupulous employer
- child may turn to crime to earn money.
- Giving money to the parents is not the permanent solution for the child:
 - The money may not be used to help the child but spent on other items.
- Once the money is used then the situation is back to square one.
- The long term rehabilitation of the child is jeopardised.
- Threatening eliminates the employer from the rehabilitation process of the child.

What works?

- The interests of the child must always be put first.
- Systematic rehabilitation – gradual rehabilitation/main streaming of the children.
- Vocational education and Apprenticeship programmes.
- Awareness raising among the parents.
- Employer education (various schemes, etc).
- Sponsorship initiative for education preferably for vocational education.
- Foolproof internal control mechanism adopted by the manufacturers in case of subcontracting.
- Consult local NGOs for advice.

What is classed as hazardous work that young people under 18 cannot be employed to do?

For the purposes of the ILO Convention, the term "the worst forms of child labour" comprises:

- a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including
- b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;
- c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular
- d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

Examples of Industries where child labour may be an issue

- Footwear
 - Textiles and clothing
 - Mining and quarrying
 - Hand-knotted carpets
 - Brass and base metal articles
 - Gemstone polishing
 - Agriculture and plantations
 - Fireworks
 - Glass and glassware
- Note:
- Child Labour is often found as helpers to skilled labourers.
 - They can be working within the family and the home.
 - This may be at the initial stage of production or at the end for packaging.
 - Children are more commonly found where tasks are subcontracted outside the factory premises and often when sub-contracted to a home working situation.

The key action you can take is to require proof of age for all workers before offering employment and ensure if you use subcontractors or homeworkers that this process also takes place on these more remote sites. Records must then be kept.

Reference: ILO Convention 138 (Minimum age Convention), ILO Convention 182 (Worst Forms of Child Labour)