

National Child Employment Week campaign finds 541 children being employed illegally across the UK

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A hard hitting campaign to crackdown on illegal child employment led by local education authorities from across the UK during the last two weeks of May 2009 found 541 school aged children were being employed illegally.

200 Child Employment Officers and Education Welfare Officers from 25 authorities visited 2,003 employers across the UK during this year's Child Employment Week campaign.

Their visits found 1,394 school aged children working in various occupations. Of these children 541 were found to be working illegally, either without the legally required registration (work/employment permit); working hours outside of those permitted in the legislation or working in prohibited occupations.

Research shows that nearly 60 children in the UK are seriously injured or killed each year whilst working. Children who are being employed illegally and without work/employment permits are not normally covered by the employer's insurance and, therefore, are unlikely to receive compensation for their injuries.

“Recent comments by Matthew Young, Policy Advisor, Liability and Occupational Health, for the Association of British Insurers, suggest that, where an employer breaks a law or Regulation, any incident would normally invalidate the insurance policy” said Paul Kirkham, PR Officer for the National Network for Child Employment and Entertainment (NNCEE).

“Employers must ensure that they have carried out all obligations in law and also are aware of any risks and other necessary safety procedures before they employ a child”.

There are more than 200 statutory laws and regulations governing the employment of school aged children and any contravention invalidates any insurance policies the employer may have.

“This is not designed as a persecution or prosecution exercise, but to provide Child Employment and Education Welfare Officers with the opportunity to visit employers, shopping centres, markets and any other places where school aged children are, or would be, employed; to offer advice regarding the legal situation on child employment”

Paul Kirkman

NNCEE Public Relations