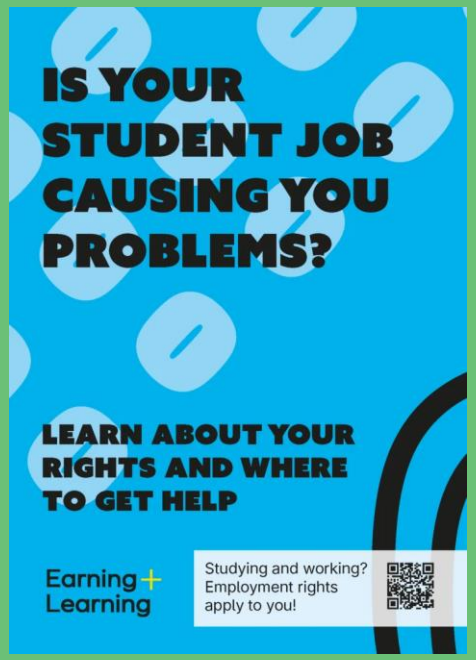
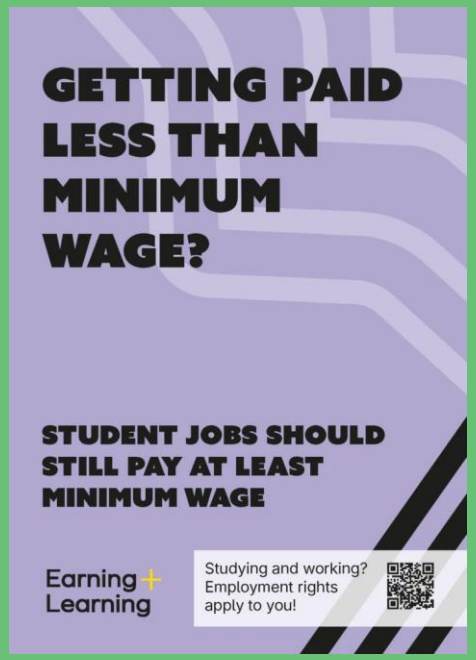
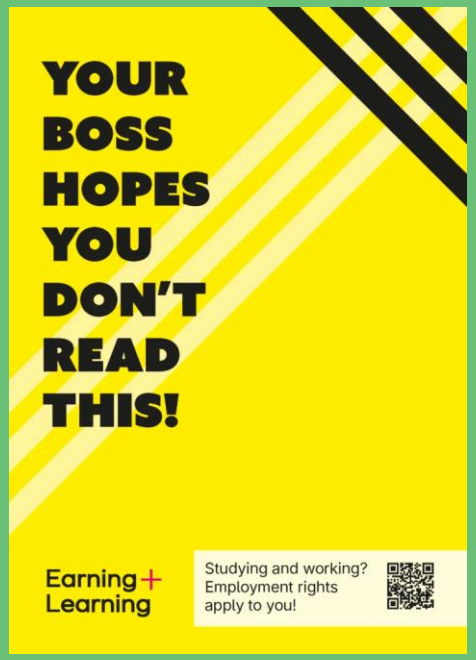




Students' Rights at Work Campaign: Engaging student workers in your workplace

TUC Union Reps Connect!

8th October 2026, Leeds



Earning + Learning



Workshop agenda...

1. Background to the campaign
   - Research insights: Earning and learning
   - Activity: Where are the students in your workplace?
   - Research insights: student workers' conditions, rights and union engagement
   - Activity: Why organise student workers?
2. Introducing the campaign
   - Our partners and Expert Advisory Board
   - Campaign materials and resources
   - Activity: Building a campaign with student workers



Insights from a major research project

- National three year study exploring young women's earliest experiences of paid work, including student work ('Earning and Learning')
- We conducted focus group **interviews with 83 women** (aged 14-23) in schools, colleges and universities across England about their experiences of student work.
- We also analysed high-quality national UK survey datasets of student work: APS, Next Steps, COSMO.

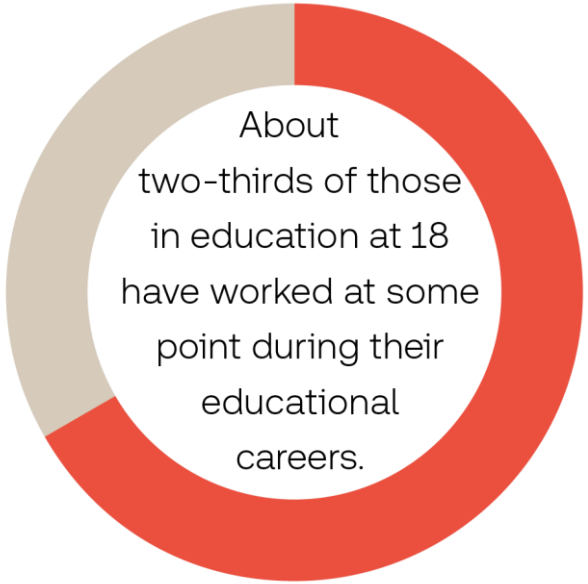


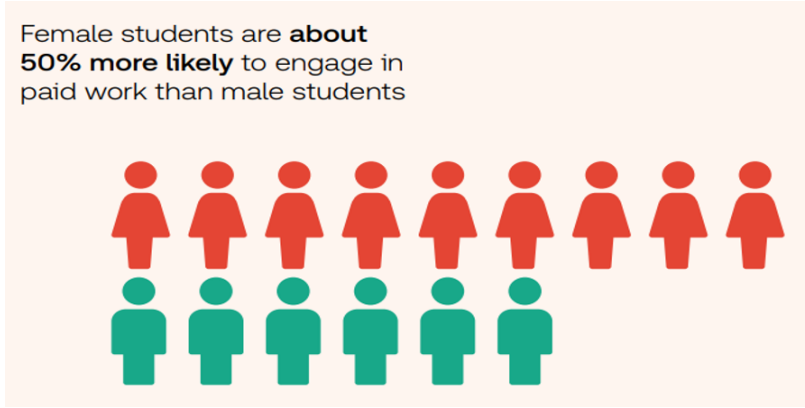
What did we find? Who are student workers and where are they?

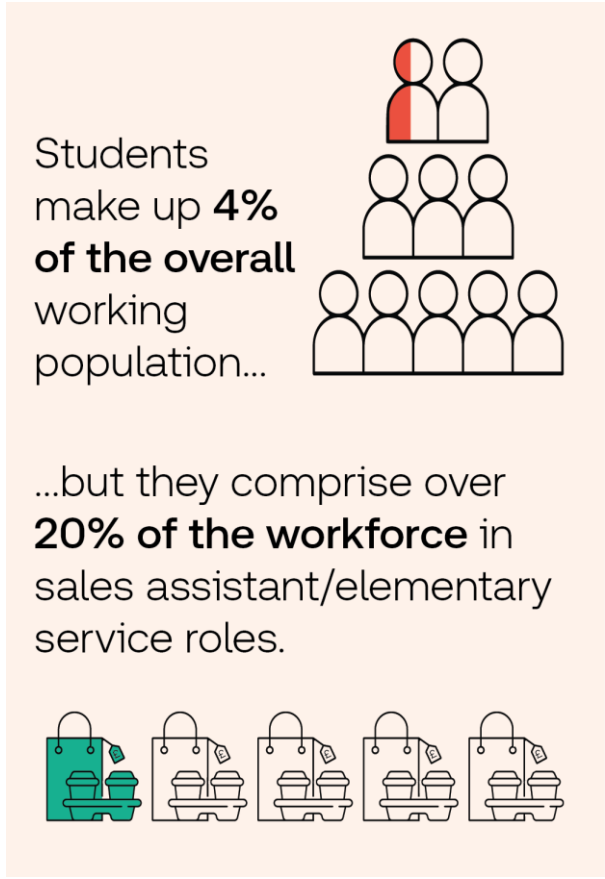
1. Most students work alongside study – from school, further education and higher education

2. Students are a key segment of the workforce, especially in some sectors like retail and hospitality

3. Young women are about 50% more likely than men to be working while studying, so student work is an equality issue.







ACTIVITY 1

- Are their students in your workplace?
  - Do you know?
  - How many?
  - What differentiates them?

What did we find? Student workers' pay and conditions

Paid work is very important for students as a source of financial freedom, helping them develop skills and experience for their CVs, and socialise with friends. For many work is also a financial necessity.

I just like having a job, like having work, doing something else, because obviously I think you learn a lot of life skills from having a job and responsibility …and obviously the reward of getting paid and learning how to try and be good with money. **ANA**



I [need the] money to live off I'm on the max loan, so the entire loan goes on accommodation. **CLAIRE**

But…

- Some participants had experienced not being paid, being paid late, or not receiving national minimum wage for their age.
- Some students work very long hours, sometime without breaks.
- They felt they had little choice over their hours or shifts. Some frequently had shifts cancelled last minute.

I had an issue where my boss didn't tell me that minimum wage had gone up… **I got underpaid massively**…. I think it was like £70 odd quid that I was not paid. **NORAH**

Tell me why my hourly wage was less than one of their croissants? I'm sorry that is actually insane! **ARIANA**

Some student workers experience significant mental health issues, burnout and anxiety as a result of juggling work and study

It was like only this long until I would not be able to do this anymore and explode…. the job just **wasn't sustainable alongside me studying** at the same time. Like something had to give…**I had a bit of a mental breakdown**….. I actually got written off the job for anxiety and stress because I couldn't sustain it, it was ridiculous. **MATILDA**

It completely r**uined my mental health.** I would literally cry before every shift and I would cry after every shift. It was terrible. **CARRIE**

Abuse and sexual harassment at work is common.

I feel like **you do get a lot of abuse…** it makes you so angry **because people treat you like horribly. MAISIE**

I've worked in a lot of bars and clubs and the harassment is really bad, **people will touch you….** because they're your money ,they're you clients. **Sometimes you just have to suck it up**, which is not great. **MARINA**

Students feel exploited and replaceable, and have little voice or power in the workplace

They lack knowledge of their rights at work or how to enact these

Few know about unions or are members of a trade union

It's really difficult because a lot of jobs you're getting **quite exploited**, it's kind of difficult to try and get change or … like say anything about it really, because **employers don't really care'....**There wouldn't be any unionising because we were all kids so that wasn't really possible.... They have an independent support line you can call, also you can't legally unionise or like strike if you work there because of the way its set up. **LAURA**

INT: Are you in a union?
AMY: No.
INT: Okay, is there a union?
AMY: There is a union I believe but not one that's widely advertised.

ACTIVITY 2

- Why is it important to organise student workers?
- What are the challenges to organising student workers?

Part 2: Introducing the Earning + Learning Campaign

TUC
Changing the world of work for good

YOUNG WOMEN'S TRUST

nus
national union of students

Co-creating the campaign

Earning + Learning

Expert advisory board of 8 young people with experience of combining education and work, including Lily

Ages 17-23, in the Leeds area, and in school, college and university

Met four times over 6 months.

Earning + Learning

Core requirements

developed by the Expert Advisory Board

- Attention grabbing visuals and content
- Speaking to the real problems student workers encounter
- Succinct information with a QR code
- Easy to read information on the website
- Links to trusted sources for more information
- Materials that can easily be shared in their education or work environment

Tour of the campaign

Earning + Learning

Posters / postcards

Sharing online

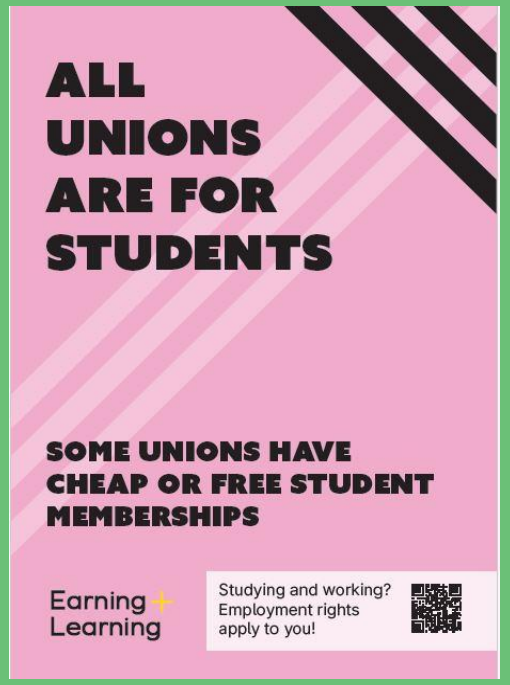
Website

Support and further information

earningandlearning.co.uk

ACTIVITY 3

- How can union reps build a campaign with student workers?
- How might the Earning + Learning resources be used within the campaign?





Support the campaign

Campaign resources:
earningandlearning.co.uk

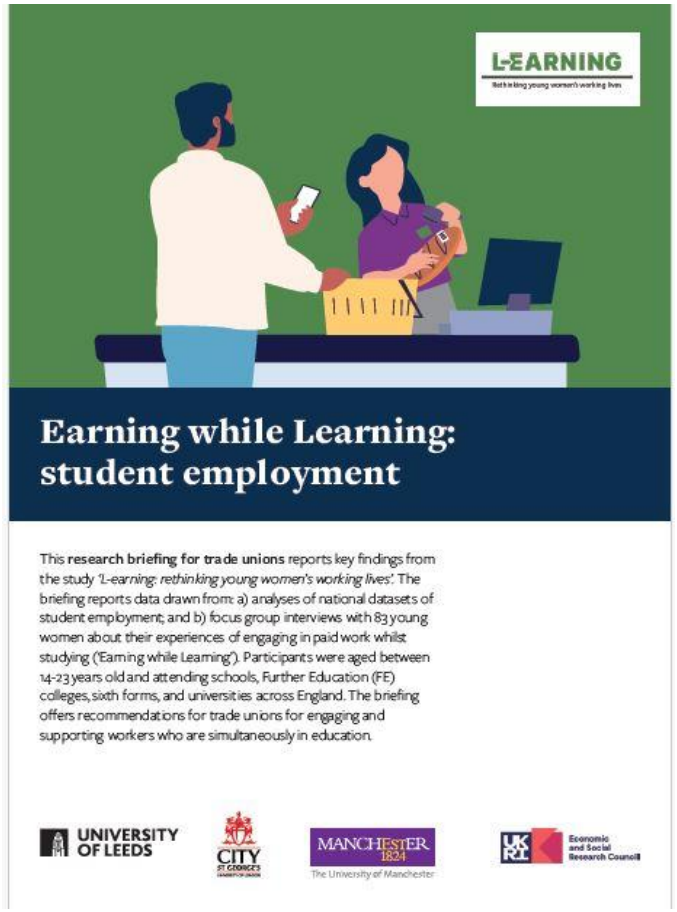
Earning + Learning

- Download and the posters, postcards and stickers- and share them in your workplaces
- Share the campaign and materials with your colleagues, members and fellow reps (and on social media)
- Get in touch via our contact form if you are interested in working together, or if you are hosting an event and are looking for speakers or training on this topic

Find out more

- Reports and briefings from the research project, including a briefing for trade unions: ywworking.co.uk/briefings

- Academic publications from the research project: ywworking.co.uk/publications



L-EARNING

Rethinking young women's working lives