

Early Years and Childcare qualification routes

A Practical Guide

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This guide has been written for anyone interested in gaining a qualification in Early years and childcare or getting a qualification on the job. It shows many routes into childcare and the qualifications that can be completed to support the requirements by Ofsted, to allow individuals to be counted in ratios.

Introduction

Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is for anyone looking to start a career in early years and childcare, change their career or progress further with their qualifications in childcare.

Where can you work?



There are many different roles you can do in early years and childcare and places you can work:

- nurseries
- pre-schools
- playgroups
- Children's centres
- schools
- your own home as a childminder

Starting a career in Early years and childcare is an exciting opportunity to make a difference to children. You will play an important part in providing the foundations for their learning. You will support them to reach their milestones and make learning fun and exciting. Every day is different and it allows you to be creative and share a world of imagination with children.

Further Information



Getting an approved qualification will help you develop your knowledge and skills and help you move into a career in early years and childcare. Although you don't need a qualification to start your career in childcare, often this is what nurseries and pre-schools look for. It will help the provider to count you in their staffing ratios.

Some providers will be able to offer you a position whilst you train, but it is recommended you contact local providers to ask if this is something they can currently do.

You can also care for children in your own home by becoming a childminder. This guidance explains how you can become a registered childminder, either with Ofsted or a childminder agency.

Get a Qualification before starting work

T Levels

T Levels offer students practical and knowledge-based learning at a school or college and on-the-job experience through an industry placement of at least 315 hours – approximately 45 days

You'll spend 80% of your time in the classroom and 20% on a 45-day placement with an employer to give you the skills and knowledge companies look for.

How long does it take?



T Levels are a **2-year** qualification that you can do after GCSEs as an alternative to A levels, other post-16 courses or an apprenticeship.

Your industry placement gives you the chance to learn what a real career is like while you continue your studies. When and how you complete it depends on the T Level, school or college, and employer.

How much does it cost?



Like A levels, there are no tuition fees to study a T Level if you start before you are 19. (www.tlevels.gov.uk)

Progression

Your T Level will be worth UCAS points (a T Level Distinction* is worth the same as 3 A levels at A*) and will be recognised by universities and other education providers so you can choose to continue studying if you wish.

When you pass your T Level, you will get a nationally recognised certificate showing the overall grade you achieved - pass, merit, distinction or distinction*. It will also give details of what you learned on the course to help you move into skilled employment or a higher apprenticeship.

Think you might like to do a T Level, but need additional help to get you ready to do one? The T Level Transition Programme is a 1-year post-GCSE study programme designed to prepare you for your chosen T Level.

It will enable you to develop your English and maths, practical, technical and study skills, and provide work experience to help you excel in your T Level.

Talk to your T Level school or college to see if this could be right for you.

Level 2 Diploma for the Early Years Practitioner

The aim of this qualification is to provide learners with the knowledge and understanding of babies and young children from birth to 7 years of age with applied knowledge in the early years, 0-5 years. The qualification content meets the Department for Education's (DfE) Level 2 full and relevant criteria for a Level 2 Early Years Practitioner in the workforce.

Who is it suitable for?

This qualification is ideal for learners looking to work with children between birth and 5 years, and gain knowledge of working with children up to 7 years. Learners do not need to have previous experience or qualifications in working with children to undertake this qualification.

Entry requirements

Learners must be aged 16 or over. Learners will need to be working, volunteering or on practical placement to show competence in both knowledge and skills. We recommend learners complete 250 placement hours whilst undertaking this qualification.

Placement opportunity must allow for skills application with babies and young children sufficient to meet the assessment criteria for the qualification.

How much does it cost?



Various with different training providers

Job Roles

This qualification allows a learner to count towards the level 2 ratio as a qualified Level 2 Early years Practitioner.

Learners may work under supervision in a variety of roles such as:

- Nursery practitioner
- classroom assistant
- pre-school practitioner

To find out what training is available where you live, speak to your local college, training provider or careers service [Contact us | National Careers Service](#)

Level 3 Diploma in Childcare and Education

The Diploma in Childcare and Education (Early Years Educator) enables learners to gain the knowledge and experience which will allow them to work with children from birth to 5 years. Upon achievement of the Level 3 Diploma in Childcare and Education it is intended that learners will be able to access higher education or enter the workforce as Early Years Educators.

Who is it suitable for?

This qualification is suitable for a range of learners either working or wishing to work in Early years education and care. The Diploma is also suitable for those wishing to progress to higher education.

Entry requirements

You should be at least 16 years old. Colleges or training providers may have their own guidelines.

How much does it cost?



Various with different training providers.

Job roles

This qualification allows a learner to count towards the level 3 ratio as a qualified Level 3 Early years Practitioner.

You can progress to:

room lead in nurseries.

deputy manager or manager with further experience.

To find out what training is available where you live, speak to your local college, training provider or [Contact the National Careers Service \(Gov.uk\)](#)

You can get **free level 3 early years qualifications** if you:

- don't already have a level 3 or higher qualification
- are unemployed or earning below the National Living Wage annually – this is regardless of any other qualifications you hold

You can also get **free maths level 2 courses** if you do not already have a GCSE in maths at grade 4 (or equivalent).

BA (Hons) Early childhood studies

This course gives you the recognition of becoming an Early Childhood Studies Graduate Practitioner, enabling you to achieve practitioner status as a Level 6 graduate alongside the Level 3 Early Years Educator (EYE) practitioner status if you do not already hold a practical qualification within the Early Childhood field.

Who is it suitable for?

If you currently work with children from birth to seven years or are looking to learn more about young children's lives and experiences, this degree could be of interest to you.

What you will study

This course will equip you with the necessary expertise to become a successful Early childhood professional, with a key focus on children and their families aged 0-8 years. You will become research informed and a reflective practitioner, as well as gaining knowledge in policy and practice as a developing graduate in the Early years sector.

Entry requirements

Each university will have their own entry criteria. This may also differ if you choose to do distance learning through such as Open university.

How long does it take?



Full time – 3 Years

Part time – 6 Years

Study time is around 16-18 hours a week part time if done through distance learning.

Possible Career Opportunities

Graduate practitioner role in an Early years setting

Setting up your own early childhood business

Family support worker

Charity sector worker

A range of roles in Children's services.

For more information, contact the University and enquire about the BA (Hons) in Early Childhood Studies.

Get a qualification on the job

Early years Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are an exciting option - you get hands-on training and also the chance to put your skills into practice.

Apprenticeships are available at multiple levels. From school leavers, people upskilling in their careers and complete career changes. There are hundreds to choose from and some include a qualification, like a degree. Find out more at www.apprenticeships.gov.uk

If you are

- 16 years and over
- Not already in full-time education
- Live in England

Then you could qualify to start an apprenticeship.

Entry requirements

- 16 or older
- Not in full time education
- Live in England

Some apprenticeships require certain qualifications, for example GCSE English and Maths.

How much does it cost?



Apprenticeships are funded from contributions made by the government and your employer. This means you will not have any student loans or tuition fees.

You'll just need to cover the cost of your day-to-day expenses, such as lunch and travel.

If you're 16 to 24 and a care leaver, you'll receive a £1,000 bursary payment to support you in the first year of your apprenticeship.

How much can I earn?

Updated wage rates for apprenticeships can be found through the following link [National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage rates - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-living-wage)

For more information about apprenticeships and to see if they are right for you, click on the link for more information.

[Apprenticeships www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/apprentices/becoming-apprentice](http://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/apprentices/becoming-apprentice)

You can see who is offering apprenticeships in your area before you apply:

[Browse apprenticeships before you apply](#)

Childminder (Ofsted registered)

If you want to look after children in your own home for 2 hours or more a day, you can register as a childminder. If you want to care for children up to 5 years old, you need to join the Early years register. If you want to look after children age 5 – years old, you must join the Childcare register. You can also join both registers.

As a registered childminder you'll have a huge impact on families, helping them manage their childcare needs as well as supporting parents in raising their children. At the same time, you'll be running your own small business, investing in your own personal development and, perhaps, managing staff, too.

Register as a childminder

- If you own your own home or have the landlords permission
You will need:
 - an [enhanced check with barred lists for home based workers](#) from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).
 - first aid training for the age group you will look after
 - a [health declaration booklet](#)
 - contact details for 2 references
 - a [certificate of good character](#) from an embassy - if you've lived abroad in the past 5 years

You will need to pay an annual fee to Ofsted .

Caring for only children age 5 and under - £35

Caring for only children aged over 5 years - £103

Caring for children of all ages - £35

How long does it take?



It usually takes up to 12 weeks to process your application.

You need to register online through the government website [Become a childminder or nanny \(England\): Register as a childminder - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

An inspector will come to your home to check:

- your identity and qualifications - including first aid qualifications
- your house and garden are safe for children
- that you're familiar with the [early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) requirements](#) and know how to put them into practice
- your level of English

You will not usually get a registration visit if you're only looking after children aged over 5.

Register as a childminder without domestic premises

A 'childminder without domestic premises' is a childminder who works solely from somewhere other than a home, like a community or village hall. Childminders without domestic premises cannot work from their or anyone else's home at any time under this type of registration.

You can find application guidance and the link to register on [Register as a childminder without domestic premises - GOV.UK](#)

Childminder (agency registered)

You can also be a childminder in your own home registered through a Childminding Agency.

You can find a list of agencies through the link [Childminder agencies: list of agencies - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Registering with an agency means you are not inspected by Ofsted, but the agency is. Each agency charges different fees for the support they offer. We recommend you research each agency to see which one suits your needs most.

Early Years Skills Bootcamps

If you are looking to update your skills to progress in your current job or to move into a different role, a Skills Bootcamp could be for you. You'll also be offered a job interview at the end of the course.

If you are aged over 19 and are looking for a new career or deciding if Early years is right for you, the skills bootcamp may be for you.

How much does it cost?



The cost is FREE if you are taking the course yourself and not through your employer.

If you claim universal credits, you can apply for a boot camp and continue to claim benefits while you're on the course.

How long does it take?



The course lasts up to 16 weeks.

For more information on skills bootcamps visit [Skills Bootcamps - JobHelp](#)

Teaching Assistants

Level 3 Teaching assistant course

This is the perfect course if you want to become a fully qualified Teaching Assistant. This course is listed on the government Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) and with OFQUAL meaning it's a fully recognised Level 3 qualification so you can work in both primary and secondary schools. There's no need to be working in a school for this course and you can enrol on it at any-time of the year. This NCFE CACHE accredited course is the official government Level 3 Teaching Assistant course. It is **fully recognised & accepted by OFSTED** so you're qualified to work in all primary and secondary schools.

Who is it suitable for?

Anyone wishing to start a career as a TA in Schools. You do not need GCSE or A-Levels for this course

You do not need to be working in a school for this course

How much does it cost?



On average this course is around £375.00

How long does it take?



This course takes 120 hours home study time.

Job roles

Teaching assistant in Primary and Secondary schools.

Wraparound childcare worker qualification

Level 3 award in transition to playwork

The aim of this qualification is to provide learners, who have experience and who are qualified at level 3 in working with children, with an understanding of the playwork principles and theories that underpin playwork practice. The qualification also aims to cover how applying the playwork principles and theories provides a framework that enables and supports children's play, and their overall development. It also offers an opportunity for reflection on the learner's own practice and supports progression to competence-based playwork qualifications.

Who is it suitable for?

This qualification is designed for learners who work or wish to work with children and young people between the ages of 4 to 16 in play environments.

It may also be useful to learners studying qualifications in the following areas:

- supporting teaching and learning
- youthwork
- Forest Schools

Entry requirements

Learners who wish to study this qualification must be at least 18 years old and must have 2 years' of childcare/education experience as well as one of the following:

- a full level 3 competency-based qualification in education or childcare or a historical qualification with education or childcare that would encompass early years, childcare, supporting teaching and learning, youthwork, Forest Schools
- an alternative regulated full level 3 competency-based qualification that recognises the ability of learners to work with children in the absence of their parents/caregivers (for example, residential childcare/social care with children/sports)

What does it cost?



On average this course is around £56 with NCFE

Job roles

- hospital playwork practitioner
- holiday club practitioner
- after school club practitioner
- adventure centre practitioner



Links to Websites and Resources

[Find an apprenticeship - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[Become a childminder or nanny \(England\): Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[Childminder agencies: list of agencies - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years | PACEY](https://www.pacey.org)

[National Day Nurseries Association - NDNA](https://www.ndna.org)

[early years alliance | \(eyalliance.org.uk\)](https://eyalliance.org.uk)

[Early years qualification requirements and standards - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)



Links to Training

[Early Childhood Studies BA \(Hons\) Undergraduate Course | Nottingham Trent University](https://www.nottingham.ac.uk)

[Home | NCFE](https://www.ncfe.co.uk)

[Early Years and Education | Nottingham College](https://www.nottingham.ac.uk)

[Course search results - West Notts College \(wnc.ac.uk\)](https://www.wnc.ac.uk)

[Distance Learning Courses and Adult Education - The Open University](https://www.open.ac.uk)

[Early Years training. Online & face to face. \(theearlyyearstraininghub.com\)](https://www.theearlyyearstraininghub.com)

[Early years education and childcare training | Nottinghamshire County Council](https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk)

[Vocational Education and Apprenticeships | City & Guilds \(cityandguilds.com\)](https://www.cityandguilds.com)

[Pearson qualifications | Edexcel, BTEC, LCCI and EDI | Pearson qualifications](https://www.pearson.com)

Early Years campaign Do something big

[Work in a nursery - Early Years Careers](https://www.earlyyears.gov.uk)

[Job application support - Early Years Careers](https://www.earlyyears.gov.uk)

[Real stories - Early Years Careers](https://www.earlyyears.gov.uk)