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Guidance

Check early years qualifications

Find out if a person's qualifications allow them to work in an early years setting, and if you can include them in staff:child ratios.

From: [Department for Education](#)

Published 25 April 2014

Last updated 13 October 2021 — [See all updates](#)

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This guidance is for anyone who wants to find out information about early years qualifications.

All early years providers working with children from birth to 5 years old must follow the regulations on early years foundation stage (EYFS) staff:child ratios. This is the number of qualified staff, at different qualification levels, an early years setting needs to have in order to meet the needs of all children and ensure their safety. These regulations are set out in the [statutory framework for the early years foundation stage \(EYFS\)](#).

Providers must make sure staff have the appropriate qualifications to count in the ratios, including the need to have at least one staff member trained in [paediatric first aid](#).

Qualification requirements

The Department for Education (DfE) defines the qualifications that staff must hold to count in EYFS staff:child ratios. Providers can use our [early years qualifications lists](#) to:

- check if a person's qualification meets the approved 'full and relevant' criteria for early years qualifications
- confirm if a person counts in the EYFS staff:child ratios

If a person holds a level 2 qualification that meets the level 2 full and relevant criteria, you can count them towards the EYFS staff:child ratios at level 2.

If a person holds a qualification at level 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7 that meets the level 3 full and relevant criteria, you can count them towards the EYFS staff:child ratios at level 3.

If a person holds a qualification at level 4 or 5 (completed as part of a level 6 course), unless the level 4 or level 5 qualification is listed as meeting the full and relevant criteria, they cannot be counted in the EYFS staff:child ratios at level 3.

Depending on whether the qualification was started before or after 1 September 2014, you may also need suitable [level 2 literacy and numeracy qualifications](#).

Qualifications started before 1 September 2014

Staff who completed or registered for a qualification before 1 September 2014 must hold a qualification that meets the [full and relevant criteria for early years qualifications](#) in order to count towards

the level 2 or level 3 EYFS staff:child ratios. They do not need to hold level 2 literacy and numeracy qualifications.

Search our complete list of all approved [pre-September 2014 early years qualifications](#).

The title of the qualification on the spreadsheet has to match exactly the title on the qualification certificate. If it does not match exactly, then it is not an approved qualification for working in the staff:child ratios.

If your qualification is not listed or is listed but is not full and relevant, level 3 and level 2 early years qualifications that are approved for working in staff:child ratios after 1 September 2014 can be found in the [EYFS staff:child ratios - DfE approved qualifications guidance](#). These can be used if anyone wants to undertake a DfE approved early years qualification.

Qualifications started after 1 September 2014

Changes to NCFE CACHE and Pearson early years educator (EYE) and early years practitioner (EYP) qualification certificates

When employing a member of staff, you will need to check NCFE CACHE and Pearson qualification certificates to establish:

- whether the learner has achieved a 'knowledge only pathway' early years educator (EYE) or early years practitioner (EYP) qualification
- if the qualification has not met the EYE criteria

This will be clearly displayed on the certificate.

Where the achievement of the qualification is 'knowledge only pathway' or does not state the EYE status, the holder cannot be counted in the staffing ratios. The 'knowledge only pathway' EYE or EYP qualification allows the learner to progress to further education or higher education.

You can:

- get more information on the [NCFE CACHE](#) website
- see which qualifications are affected using the documents on [EYFS staff:child ratios - DfE approved qualifications](#)

Level 2

From 1 September 2014 until 31 August 2019, all level 2 early years qualifications are full and relevant if they are:

- early years (0 to 5 years) related and appropriate to early years

practice

- Ofqual-approved and included on their [list of regulated qualifications](#)

Appropriate to early years practice means that the qualification needs to be relevant to working in an early years setting that covers childcare and child development for the 0 to 5 age range. A level 2 qualification in babysitting, for example, would not be appropriate to early years practice.

From 1 September 2019, all level 2 qualifications must meet the [level 2 early years practitioner criteria](#). Awarding organisations have developed these qualifications and they have been available from 1 September 2019.

Search our list of approved early years qualifications that meet the [level 2 early years practitioner criteria](#). We will update this list when new qualifications are added.

Level 3

From 1 September 2014, all level 3 qualifications must meet the [early years educator criteria](#). This means that all staff who have registered for a qualification since that date can be counted in the EYFS staff:child ratios at level 3 if they hold:

- a level 3 early years educator qualification
- suitable [level 2 literacy and numeracy qualifications](#)

Search our full list of [early years qualifications that meet the early years educator criteria](#).

If a person holds a level 3 early years qualification but does not have suitable level 2 literacy and numeracy qualifications, you can only count them at level 2 in the EYFS staff:child ratios.

If a person holds a level 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7 that is not on our list of approved early years educator qualifications, they may be able to count in the EYFS staff:child ratios at level 2 providing that:

- the qualification was taken between 1 September 2014 and 31 August 2019
- the qualification is 0 to 5 years related
- the qualification is appropriate to early years practice

Appropriate to early years practice means that the qualification covers childcare and child development for the 0 to 5 age range.

From 1 September 2019, level 3 (or above) qualifications started on or after this date cannot be counted in the level 2 staff:child ratios as shown

above. From 1 September 2019, level 2 qualifications must meet the [early years practitioner criteria](#) and be listed on our [approved list of level 2 early years practitioner qualifications](#).

These are the minimum qualification requirements that we expect staff to have if they want to work in an early years setting. However, employers can set their own higher qualification requirements when recruiting staff if they wish. Employers would need to ensure that higher level qualifications are either on the DfE approved list or that the employee also holds a DfE approved level 3 qualification.

We also do not set entry requirements for early years training courses. Training providers set their own entry requirements for entry to courses.

Paediatric first aid (PFA)

Newly qualified staff with a level 2 or level 3 early years qualification, awarded after 30 June 2016, must also have either a full paediatric first aid (PFA) or an emergency PFA certificate within 3 months of starting work. If they do not have this you cannot count them in the EYFS staff:child ratios at level 2 or level 3.

You may also wish to encourage new staff to complete PFA training so that your early years setting can apply for [Millie's Mark](#). This is a voluntary quality-mark awarded to settings where all staff have an appropriate PFA qualification.

Early childhood studies (ECS) and related degrees

Staff who graduated since 1 September 2014 with a degree in early childhood studies (ECS), or a related degree, count at level 3 in the staff:child ratios, as long as they:

- took a qualification that was consistent with the [QAA subject benchmark statement for ECS](#) (training providers will provide this clarification)
- took a qualification with an element of assessed performance in an early years setting
- hold suitable [level 2 literacy and numeracy qualifications](#)

Early childhood studies degrees with early childhood graduate practitioner competencies

Staff who have graduated since July 2019 with an early childhood studies degree and early childhood graduate practitioner competencies have taken a qualification that was consistent with the [QAA subject](#)

[benchmark statement for Early Childhood Studies.](#)

They have met [early childhood competencies demonstrating practice, skills and knowledge at level 6.](#)

These graduates can be counted as full and relevant at level 3 in the staff: child ratios, as long as they:

- took a qualification with an element of mentored and assessed performance in an early childhood setting
- hold suitable [level 2 literacy and numeracy qualifications](#)
- graduated from an institution listed as a member of the [Early Childhood Studies Degree Network \(ECSDN\)](#)

Qualified teacher and early years teacher status

Staff count towards the EYFS staff:child ratios at level 3 or 6 if they have been awarded:

- qualified teacher status (QTS)
- early years teacher status (EYTS)
- early years professional status (EYPS)

They do not need separate [level 2 literacy and numeracy qualifications.](#) This applies to people awarded QTS, EYTS or EYPS before and after 1 September 2014.

Overseas qualifications

The Early Years Service provided by [UK National Information Centre](#) (UK ENIC) ended on 31 December 2020. As of 1 January 2021, applications for recognition of overseas qualifications should now be sent for the attention of the early years workforce team.

Recognition will be granted where qualifications are comparable in scope, content and level to either of the following:

- [early years educator \(EYE\) qualifications criteria](#)
- [early years practitioner \(EYP\) qualifications criteria](#)

You should include the following in your request for recognition email to the early years workforce team:

- confirmation of either the EYE or EYP criteria that you want the qualification to be compared to
- photos of the final certificate

- your transcript, including full detail of the content of the modules studied
- a statement of comparability (SoC) from UK ENIC (European Network of Information Centres) - the SoC will also need to include details of any English and maths qualifications obtained overseas to fulfil the literacy and numeracy requirements for level 3 early years educators

If any of the documents are not in English, we will need certified translations. The translations need to show:

- qualification title
- full detail of the content of the modules studied

We are unable to assess your request without the required evidence.

Email all your evidence to the early years workforce team at:

earlyyearsoverseas.qualifications@education.gov.uk

You can start an application for a [UK ENIC statement of comparability on their website](#).

There are [literacy and numeracy requirements](#) for level 3 early years educators.

Decisions already received from the DfE about overseas qualifications for working in the EYE or EYP staffing ratios will remain recognised and valid.

If you trained as a teacher overseas, you may be able to obtain qualified teacher status (QTS). This would enable you to work in early years or in primary schools. For more information, read [qualified teacher status \(QTS\): qualify to teach in England](#).

Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish qualifications

The early years educator qualifications that started on 1 September 2014 are for England only. Anyone with a qualification from another nation of the UK, who you want to count at level 3 in the EYFS staff:child ratios may need to:

- take additional modules as part of their course
- attain appropriate [level 2 literacy and numeracy qualifications](#)

Qualifications started after September 2014 for learners from Wales and Northern Ireland

People with a Level 3 children's care learning and development (Wales

and NI) qualification must have achieved the following 4 optional units:

- R/504/2191 - Support children's language, literacy and communication
- L/504/2190 - Support children's mathematical development
- A/601/0121 - Work with babies and young children to promote their development and learning
- M/502/3812 - Engage with parents in their children's early learning

Qualifications started after September 2014 for learners from Scotland

People with a Scottish Vocational Qualification 3: children's care, learning and development at SCQF level 7, who wish to count at level 3 in the EYFS staff:child ratios, also need to achieve the following 5 optional units:

- DA09 04 (CCLD 345) - Support literacy development
- DA0A 04 (CCLD 346) - Help pupils to develop their numeracy skills
- DT1N 04 (CCLD 325) - Support children and young people during transitions in their lives
- DT1G 04 (CCLD 321) - Support children with additional support needs and their families
- DR8M 04 (CCLD 309) - Plan and implement curriculum frameworks for early education

People with a Scottish Vocational Qualification 3: SVQ 3 Social Services (Children and Young People) SCQF level 7, who wish to count at level 3 in the EYFS staff:child ratios, must have achieved the following 4 optional units:

- SCDCCLD0303 - Promote the development of children and young people
- SCDCCLD0309 - Implement frameworks for early education through the development of curriculum planning
- SCDCCLD0339 - Promote the care, learning and development of children with additional support needs in early education settings
- SCDCCLD0345 - Promote literacy, numeracy and language development for children's early learning

Nursing qualifications

Nurses registered before 1 September 2014 count towards the EYFS staff:child ratios at level 3, if they are designated as follows on the [Nursing and Midwifery Council register](#) for nurses, midwives and specialist community public health nurses:

Nurses register - sub part 1

- RN8: children's nurse, level 1
- RNC: children's nurse, level 1
- RN1: registered adult nurse, level 1

Nurses register - sub part 2

- RN7: general nurse, level 2

Midwives register

- RM: midwife

Specialist community public health nursing register

- RHV: health visitor
- HV: health visitor
- RSN: school nurse
- SN: school nurse
- SPC: specialist practitioner
- children's nursing
- SPCC: specialist practitioner: community children's nursing

The DfE consider that it would not be practical for an individual to maintain their registration if they no longer practice as a nurse. If it can be evidenced that a nurse has been on the register before 1 September 2014, then they continue to be full and relevant.

Nursing qualifications for nurses registered on or after 1 September 2014 do not meet the [full and relevant criteria for early years qualifications](#) and do not count in the EYFS staff:child ratios.

Qualifications that do not meet the criteria

A person must have a qualification that meets the full and relevant criteria for early years qualifications to count towards the early years EYFS staff:child ratios.

Changes to NCFE CACHE and Pearson early years educator (EYE) and early years practitioner (EYP) qualifications certificates

When employing a member of staff, you will need to check NCFE CACHE and Pearson qualification certificates to establish whether the learner has achieved a 'knowledge only pathway' early years educator (EYE) or early years practitioner (EYP) qualification.

For NCFE CACHE, where the achievement of the qualification is

'knowledge only pathway', the holder cannot be counted in the staffing ratios. The 'knowledge only pathway' EYE or EYP qualification allows the learner to progress to further education or higher education.

For Pearson, a 'knowledge only pathway' has been developed for EYP and the EYE status has been removed from EYE qualifications to allow the learners to progress to further or higher education.

You can:

- get more information on the [NCFE CACHE](#) website
- see which qualifications are affected using the documents on [EYFS staff:child ratios - DfE approved qualifications](#)

Health and social care qualifications do not meet the full and relevant criteria.

Level 2 literacy and numeracy qualifications

Staff who have registered for a qualification since 1 September 2014 that meets the full and relevant criteria must also have suitable level 2 literacy and numeracy qualifications to count towards the EYFS staff:child ratios at level 3.

These are:

English

- functional skills qualification in English at level 2
- GCSE/International GCSE qualification in English language and/or literature to at least grade C (grade 4)
- key skills qualification in communication at level 2
- A level or AS level qualification in English language and/or English literature to at least grade E
- O Level qualification in English to at least grade C
- CSE grade 1 English (language)
- Basic skills certificate L2 - certificate in adult literacy
- British Sign Language (BSL) for people who use BSL as their primary language

Also recognised Scottish, Northern Irish and Welsh equivalents.

Maths

- functional skills qualification in maths at level 2
- GCSE/International GCSE qualification in maths to at least grade C (grade 4)

- key skills qualification in application of number at level 2
- A level or AS level qualification in maths or pure maths and/or further maths to at least grade E
- O level qualification in maths to at least grade C
- CSE grade 1 maths
- Basic skills certificate L2 - certificate in adult numeracy

Also recognised Scottish, Northern Irish and Welsh equivalents.

Early years apprenticeships

During their training, early years apprentices can be included in the unqualified part of the staff to child ratios in an early years setting, if their employer is happy that they are competent and responsible.

Because an early years apprenticeship at level 2 or 3 includes a full and relevant level 2 or 3 qualification - no matter when it was achieved - all those who have achieved an early years apprenticeship can be counted in the staff ratios at level 2 (if they have achieved a level 2 apprenticeship) or 3 (if they have achieved a level 3 apprenticeship). Those who have achieved a level 3 early years apprenticeship will need to have obtained [suitable English and maths qualifications](#) in order to count in the level 3 child:staff ratios.

Social care, residential care and learning, development and support services apprenticeships are not full and relevant for the EYFS staff ratios.

The [Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education](#) is working with groups of employers to develop and publish new apprenticeship standards for a range of sectors.

A level 3 [early years educator standard](#) has been developed and approved for delivery. The early years educator level 3 standard meets the early years educator (EYE) criteria. Apprentices will achieve an EYE qualification which has been approved to count towards the EYFS level 3 child:staff ratios.

A level 2 [early years practitioner standard](#) has been developed and approved for delivery. The early years practitioner level 2 standard meets the early years practitioner (EYP) criteria. Apprentices will achieve an EYP qualification which has been approved to count towards the EYFS level 2 child:staff ratios.

A [level 5 early years lead practitioner apprenticeship](#) has been developed and was approved for delivery from August 2021.

A level 6 apprenticeship standard is currently being developed

T Levels

From September 2020 the first T Level in early years education and childcare will be taught at selected schools, colleges and other providers across England. T Levels are aimed at young people who want to study a subject to prepare them for a specialist job.

T Levels, which take 2 years to complete, are equivalent to taking 3 A levels and attract UCAS points. They will bring together classroom learning and work placement to give young people the knowledge and skills they need to obtain a skilled role, apprenticeship or continue to further study.

An early education and childcare T Level will meet the Early Years Educator criteria. On successful achievement of an early education and childcare T Level, the young person can count in the level 3 ratios.

Read [more information about T Levels](#).

Special educational needs and disability (SEND)

All early years providers are required to have arrangements in place to:

- identify and support children with special educational needs or disabilities
- promote equality of opportunity for children in their care

These requirements are set out in the [EYFS framework](#).

DfE has worked with organisations specialising in SEND to create a level 3 early years special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) qualification specification and job description for those working in non-maintained early years settings.

The documents developed by the group, are intended as guidance for early years providers and practitioners to help to clarify the role of the early years SENCO. They should be read alongside the '[Special educational needs and disability code of practice](#)'.

The SENCO qualification specification and job description are available on the following websites:

- [Foundation years](#)
- [SEND gateway - EY SENCO level 3 qualification specification](#)
- [SEND gateway - job description](#)

Awarding organisations will use the qualification specification to develop

qualifications for anyone wanting to specialise at level 3 as an early years SENCO. However, it is not a mandatory requirement for an individual in non-maintained settings to hold a level 3 early years SENCO qualification.

SENCOs in local authority maintained schools are required to have qualified teacher status (QTS) and to gain the [Master's-level National Award for Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator](#) within 3 years of taking up the post.

We have developed a level 2 early years SEND qualification specification, which provides continuing professional development (CPD) for level 2 practitioners who achieved a qualification before the introduction of the [new level 2 early years practitioner criteria](#).

The level 2 SEND specification is intended as guidance for early years providers and level 2 practitioners who wish to develop knowledge and skills of working with babies and children with SEND. It also provides guidance for awarding organisations and training providers to develop qualifications or training courses.

The level 2 SEND specification can be found on the following websites:

- [SEND gateway - level 2 SEND specification](#)
- [Foundation years - level 2 SEND specification](#)

Free SEND resources

The National Association of Special Educational Needs (NASEN) was funded by the DfE to produce a package of free [SEND resources](#) specific to early years, including:

- webcasts
- miniguides
- training materials

Early years career progression map

A career in early education and childcare will help you support young children as they learn, develop and prepare for school. It is rewarding, full of variety and offers progression and different career paths as you grow in experience and confidence.

DfE has worked with an expert reference group to develop an [early years careers progression map](#). It is a tool for staff to plan their careers and for those interested in working in the sector to see the range of job roles and opportunities on offer.

The map provides detailed information about different early years job roles, entry points and progression routes. It's aimed at:

- anyone considering a career in the sector
- careers advisers
- Department for Work and Pensions work coaches
- early years practitioners who wish to progress their careers
- employers

The map is also available on the following pages:

- [City & Guilds](#)
- [Pearson](#)

Published 25 April 2014

Last updated 13 October 2021 [+ show all updates](#)

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