



Department
for Education

Guidance

Pathway into early years education

Published 10 February 2022

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Background

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.

Early years career progression map

Department for Education (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 jobs and opportunities on offer.

The map provides detailed information about different early years job roles, entry points and progression routes. It is 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](#)

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](#) works with groups of early years employers to review and update the apprenticeships available to the early years sector.

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

The T Level in early years education and childcare is now 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 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 the student has achieved the EYE Occupational Specialism of the T Level in Education and Childcare, the young person can count in the level 3 ratios.

Read more about [T Levels](#).

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)

This means that they can access both level 3 and level 6 staff:child ratios, though they must operate as either level 3 or level 6 as they cannot combine them. In practice, this means that they can supervise a maximum of 13 children (as per the level 6 ratio statutory requirement).

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.

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 a full and relevant qualification as stated on post Sept 2014 qualifications, 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 ECS](#).

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 \(ECSDN\)](#)

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