Early Years Recovery Programme

**Level 3 Early Years Educator Qualification Review
NCFE**

November 2022

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This report makes use of acronyms. The first time a word, phrase or name is used, the full detail will be used followed by the acronym in brackets. For ease of reference, we have included a table below of all acronyms used throughout the report.

Abbreviation	Definition
CMA	Childminder Agency
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CREC	Centre for Research in Early Childhood
DfE	Department for Education
EPI	Education Policy Institute
EY	Early years
EYA	Early Years Alliance
EYE	Early Years Educator
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
EYP	Early Years Practitioner
EYT	Early Years Teacher
NDNA	National Day Nurseries Association
Ofqual	Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation
Ofsted	Office for Standards for Education, Children's Services and Skills
OQ	Occupational qualification
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework
SEND	Special educational needs and disabilities
TQUK	Training Qualifications UK
TUC	Trade Union Congress
VRQ	Vocationally-related qualification

Executive summary

The primary aim of this research was to review the status of the Level 3 Early Years Educator (EYE) criteria via engagement with key stakeholders and to develop a revised criteria based on feedback and user testing.

The research methodology was a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods depending on the participants. Key stakeholder groups were identified and invited to participate in focus groups or interviews.

Two quantitative surveys were distributed, targeting a general audience and parents/carers. Each sought to identify current knowledge of the sector, qualification content and requirements, and challenges facing the sector. These surveys also allowed respondents to self-select for further participation in a focus group.

The main findings are reported thematically, with the key themes identified as sector perceptions, sector challenges, sector value, areas requiring expansion in the existing criteria, skills gaps, and issues of industry quality and standardisation. Key recommendations with the regard to the criteria are as follows.

- Primarily, it is recommended that the structure of the criteria be updated and brought in line with current Level 2 criteria to aid standardisation and progression through levels.
- The terminology should be updated, with specific mention of both "babies" and children to ensure the needs of children of all ages are considered in relation to each section.
- That SEND be included in the criteria as a topic.
- There should be greater focus on the application and relevance of theoretical knowledge to practice.
- There should be explicit mention of the emotional wellbeing of the child, as well as a greater focus on the voice of the child and the role of the EYE practitioner as an advocate of the child.
- There should be specific mention of the EYE practitioner's expected roles and responsibilities in the workplace.
- There should be specific mention of inclusive practice and ensuring assessment and activities are appropriate and relate to a child's interests, developmental stage and needs.
- The safeguarding criteria should be updated, and greater detail added in relation to health and safety responsibilities, specifically allergies, illness, and application of medicine.

- Where possible, there should be stronger support and advocation for higher placement hours. Further guidance should be produced covering placement selection, process, and mentoring whilst on placement.
- There should be stronger encouragement for professionals to undertake additional continuous professional development (CPD), particularly in paediatric first aid and Makaton. The Level 3 EYE qualification should be seen as an entry point to the sector and progression and upskilling must be encouraged.

Introduction

The early years and childcare sector aims to provide high quality education and care for children aged birth to five. The early years is a crucial opportunity to ensure the later success of children and attending high quality provision has positive impacts on children's later outcomes. The sector encompasses a range of settings from reception classes in primary schools, maintained nursery schools, independent nursery schools, childminders, and other private/voluntary day care providers.

Survey research by Ipsos found that 56% of parents whose children were using formal childcare before Covid-19 reported that the disruption caused by the pandemic had "harmed" their child's social and educational development (Ipsos, 2022). Recognising the disruption caused by the pandemic and the negative effect on children and their education and development, the government announced a recovery programme for the early years sector. Part of that programme involves a focus on high-quality qualifications and targeted CPD to ensure that practitioners have the necessary skills to help them redress the negative effects of the pandemic. This report describes the findings from our review of the Level 3 criteria and qualifications.

This project seeks to improve the quality and rigour of the Level 3 EYE criteria, through consultation and engagement with stakeholders and users, and rigorous analysis of new and available data, thereby strengthening its quality and evidence base. The review considers both the Level 3 EYE criteria and its delivery.

Research aims

- To review the status of the Level 3 EYE criteria via engagement with key stakeholders to improve the quality and rigour of the criteria.
- To develop revised criteria based on stakeholder feedback and user-tested recommendations.
- To provide recommendations on potential delivery models of the Level 3 EYE qualifications.
- To identify any other potential areas of future research.

The report is structured as follows:

Section 1: Context, timelines, and the current criteria

This section details the current Level 3 EYE criteria, before discussing the broader context of policy and legislative changes in the early years sector and providing a timeline of these changes across the last 10 years.

Section 2: Current landscape and workforce data

This section presents data on take-up of existing qualification trends, qualifications with the highest level of awarding and qualifications of staff in the workplace.

Section 3: Sector challenges

This section focuses on the key challenges facing the sector.

Section 4: Methodology

This section outlines the methodology selected for the project as well as justifying the methods used.

Section 5: Main findings

This section outlines the key findings from the project. It is structured thematically.

Section 6: Recommendations

This section outlines the key recommendations for the Department for Education (DfE). It is split into 3 sections: the reviewed criteria, delivery models, and further areas of research.

Section 7: Conclusion

This section provides an overall summary of the report to this point.

Section 1: Context, timelines, and the current criteria

The current Level 3 criteria

The DfE sets out a comprehensive minimum criterion to which all Level 3 EYE qualifications must adhere. As a foundation, these criteria demand that all EYE practitioners can demonstrate an in-depth understanding of early years care and are able to:

- Support and promote children's early education and development. This includes demonstrating an understanding of children's development from birth to age 7; understanding the importance of phonics and having a range of strategies to support literacy and arithmetic development
- Plan and provide effective care, teaching and learning that enables children to progress and prepares them for school. This includes candidates providing opportunities for children to develop early education curriculum requirements, ensuring the needs of the child are reflected
- Make accurate and productive use of assessment. This includes being able to identify the needs of individual children; use a range of assessment techniques to track progress; record observational assessments accurately and discuss progress with key people, including parents and carers
- Develop effective and informed practice. Candidates are expected to engage in continuing professional development to improve skills, practice and demonstrate good written and spoken English
- Safeguard and promote the health, safety and welfare of children. This includes demonstrating knowledge of legal requirements; the ability to identify and act upon information relating to health and safety, safeguarding and welfare of children
- Work in partnership with the key person, colleagues, parents and carers or other professionals. This includes working with parents and carers to help them recognise their own contribution to their child's learning and encourage them to take an active role in play, learning and development (DfE, 2019a).

The list above sets out the broad requirements expected of Level 3 EYE practitioners, plus examples of some of the detail behind those requirements. Primarily, these are an ability to: assist children to manage life transitions; plan teaching and learning activities that prepare children for school; and support the holistic development of communication and language, physical health, and personal, social, and emotional health.

Context

The Childcare Act 2006 reformed early years regulation and inspection arrangements with the new Ofsted Childcare (Compulsory and Voluntary) Register introduced the same year; two years later, in 2008, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) was also introduced. The sufficiency, information and outcomes duties came into effect in April 2008 and the remaining provisions from September 2008. Childcare choice for families is varied and Ofsted inspect these services to ensure a high standard for children and young people. There are instances when Ofsted do not require settings to be registered – for example, childminders registered with a CMA or when the care is less than 2 hours in duration, typically in a creche-type provision (Ofsted, 2022).

The EYFS framework underpins the standards of early years and childcare learning and development. The framework was recently reformed in 2021. The aims of those reforms were twofold:

- to improve early years outcomes for all children, particularly disadvantaged children, in the critical areas that build the foundations for later success, such as language development and literacy.
- to reduce unnecessary assessment paperwork for practitioners and teachers so they can spend more valuable classroom time supporting children through rich curriculum activities.

There are 7 areas of learning in the EYFS which must shape what is taught in early years settings. These include 3 prime areas – communication and language, physical development, and personal, social and emotional development – that should support a holistic approach to learning (DfE, 2021a).

There has been a drive from within the sector and government to change perceptions so that the sector is viewed as early years education rather than "just childcare" that exists primarily to enable parents to work. Studies that support the changes in perception include the *Study of Early Education and Development: Good Practice in Early Education* (DfE, 2017) which explores how good quality early years settings articulate, establish, and sustain good practice that has the potential to improve child outcomes.

Early years reviews

To deliver a high-quality early years educational experience, a highly skilled, qualified and satisfied workforce is a necessity. However, the early years workforce reports challenges with recruitment, retention, wage stagnation and changing employee qualification requirements (The Guardian, 2022; EYA, 2021a; LEYF

Nurseries, 2022). Such is the significance of these issues that "four key reports on qualifications and the workforce were published in 2020 alone" (Nutbrown, 2021). These reports share common themes: a need for career progression, increased wages, improved working conditions, a clearer understanding of the responsibilities of practitioners and an increased appreciation for their profession (Bonetti and Blanden 2020; Campbell-Barrr et al. 2020; Pascal, Bertram, and Cole-Albäck 2020; Social Mobility Commission 2020).

The early years sector has experienced several consultations and reviews since the seminal Nutbrown review of 2012 (see Table 1). The 2012 Nutbrown review reported that the qualification and professional development system within the early years sector, at the time, was unable to equip practitioners with the skills required to deliver high quality childcare provision. Whilst the report was welcomed by sector bodies, The Sutton Trust (2022) suggested that the government response was seen as "disappointing", with only 5 of the 19 recommendations being accepted and actioned. Some within the sector saw the DfE's response to the Nutbrown report, *More Great Childcare: Raising Quality and Giving Parents More Choice* (DfE, 2013), as misinterpreting Nutbrown's initial conclusions. Wild, Silberfeld and Nightingale (2015), for example, believed Nutbrown was advocating for quality in relation to children's experiences whereas, they argued, the DfE response focused on choice and availability.

Table 1 - Timeline of reviews, publications and sector updates

Year	Review, publication, update
2012	Foundations for quality: the independent review of early education and childcare qualifications - Nutbrown review, independent report for DfE
2013	More great childcare: raising quality and giving parents more choice, DfE
2013	More affordable childcare, DfE
2013	*Early years educator (Level 3): qualifications criteria review*
2014	*Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework (updated)*
2016	National curriculum assessments: early years foundation stage, DfE last updated 2021
2017	Early years workforce strategy DfE
2018/19	*Early years practitioner (level 2) qualifications criteria review*
2021	Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework, DfE (updated)

Source: DfE website, 2022

In Autumn 2021, the government announced extra funding for schools and colleges to help support the education recovery process following the Covid-19 pandemic (DfE, 2021b). Nursery World (2021) reported the sector's response to the announcement of the recovery programme as being met with "disappointment", with the Early Years Alliance stating that the measures announced lacked "focus" and the funds promised were "insufficient to make meaningful difference" (2021b). However, the response to the review likely reflects longer-term concerns about the funding of the early years sector (EYA, 2021b).

Section 2: Current landscape and workforce data

Introduction

In this section, we present data on the take-up of existing qualification trends, qualifications with the highest level of awarding and qualifications of staff in the workplace. The key findings from this data are:

- Increased take-up of Level 3 EYE qualifications 2015 onwards until 2020, at which point there are relatively small falls in both 2020 and 2021.
- Occupational qualifications (which include some work-based placement) had a higher take-up and had grown at a greater rate than vocationally-related qualifications (which tend to be classroom based).
- The proportion of staff in school or group-based environment who hold an EYE) qualification increased significantly between 2019 and 2021. In contrast, there was no change amongst practitioners working as childminders.

Take-up of existing Level 3 EYE qualifications

The DfE publish a list of 'full and relevant' qualifications, which are those that meet the criteria for staff to be included in the EYFS staff:child ratio. As of June 2021, Ofqual certificate volume data showed that there were 9 Level 2 qualifications which met the criteria; these were taken by 6,998 learners. At Level 3, 27 courses counted as full and relevant, of which 17 had learners certificating in 2021, accounting for 12,330 certificates.

Table 2 shows the change in uptake of Level 2 and 3 qualifications since 2014. Level 3 uptake has experienced a slight decline since 2020, however Level 2 has seen a steady year-on-year increase since 2018.

Table 2: Certificate volume for EYE qualifications by level, post-2014

Qualification level	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Level 2	-	-	-	-	96	106	4,538	6,998
Level 3	-	776	9,864	13,107	13,301	13,819	4,538	12,330

Please note this data only shows figures for qualifications which meet the current Level 2 early years practitioner (EYP) criteria.

Source: Ofqual certificate volume data 2021

Routes to achieving a Level 3 qualification

Ofqual certificate volume data shows that of the 17 Level 3 qualifications in 2021, 15 are categorised as occupational, meaning they have a direct link to an occupation and the learner could reasonably expect to be able to move into a relevant occupation following study (Ofqual, 2018). These courses should be based on occupational standards and have some work-based assessment. The remaining two courses are categorised as vocationally-related qualifications (VRQs) which are generally taught in a classroom setting with written or practical assessments (ibid). Table 3 shows the number of occupational qualifications at Levels 2 and 3 in early years has increased since 2014, whereas the number of VRQs is much smaller and remained steady during this time.

Table 3 - Certificate volume for post-2014 EYE qualifications by type

Type	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Occupational qualification (OQ)	-	717	9,419	11,973	11,584	11,849	15,533	17,356
Vocationally-related qualification (VRQ)	30	137	700	1,461	2,162	2,363	2,258	2,253

Source: Ofqual certificate volume, 2021

Table 4 shows the 5 Level 3 qualifications awarding the highest number of certificates in 2021. NCFE award three of the five, with City & Guilds and TQUK awarding one each.

Table 4 - Qualifications awarding the highest number of certificates 2021

Title	Type	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
NCFE CACHE Level 3 Diploma for the Early Years Workforce (Early Years Educator) (601/2629/2)	OQ	3,531	4,067	4,450	4,365	4,300
NCFE CACHE Technical Level 3 Diploma in Childcare and Education (Early Years Educator) (601/8437/1)	OQ	1	1,870	2,491	2,700	3,160
City & Guilds Level 3 Diploma for the Early Years Practitioner (Early Years Educator) (601/3118/4)	VQ	1,300	1,830	2,022	1,656	1,201
TQUK Level 3 Diploma for the Children's Workforce (Early Years Educator) (601/7670/2)	OQ	1	22	345	505	1,040
NCFE CACHE Level 3 Diploma in Childcare and Education (Early Years Educator) (601/4000/8)	OQ	3,155	1,365	845	561	605

Source: Ofqual Certificate Volume, 2021

Entry requirements for a Level 3 early years course

Early years sector staff are required to have a Level 2 (the equivalent of GCSEs, including Functional Skills) in English and maths, to the equivalent of a grade C/4 (or higher) to be counted in the Level 3 staff:child ratios. The top 5 recruiting courses all state the GCSE requirement to enter the profession in employment. Training providers can set their own recruitment criteria should they wish to do so. No awarding organisation specifies the need for any practical experience for entry onto a course.

Level 3 staff in the workplace

The *Survey of Childcare and Early Year Providers* (DfE, 2021c) estimated there were 62,000 providers in England in Spring 2021 with at least one child aged 0-4 registered with them. In total, these provided over 1.5 million Ofsted registered childcare places (DfE, 2021c). As shown in Figure 1, most early years staff in both school-based and group-based providers were reported to be qualified to at least

Level 3 (82% and 80% respectively), consistent with the figures for 2019. School-based nurseries reported a third of their staff to be qualified to degree level (Level 6) in 2021. Within early years providers classed as childminders, around three out of four staff were qualified to Level 3 (74%) and only 9% were qualified to Level 6.
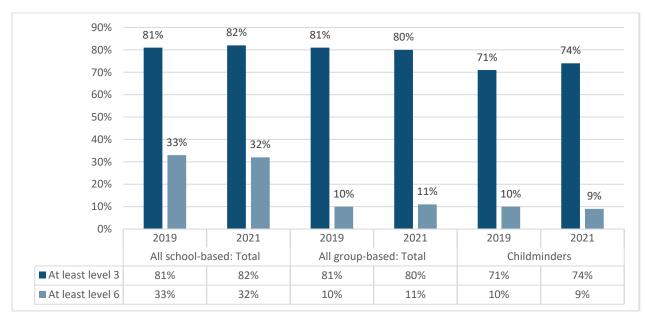
Figure 1 - Proportion of staff by level of qualification and provider type 2019-2021

	All school-based: Total		All group-based: Total		Childminders	
	2019	2021	2019	2021	2019	2021
At least level 3	81%	82%	81%	80%	71%	74%
At least level 6	33%	32%	10%	11%	10%	9%

Source: DfE Survey of Childcare and Early Year Providers, 2021

Table 5 shows the proportion of those educated to Level 3 in school-based, group-based and childminder settings who have an EYE qualification.

Table 5 - Proportion of staff with an EYE qualification

	2019	**2021**
All school-based: total	34%	41%*
All group-based: total	27%	38%*
Childminders	38%	38%

Statistically significant difference between 2019 and 2021 at 5% level

Source: DfE Survey of Childcare and Early Year Providers, 2021

Despite these recent positive shifts, historically, the sector has been unsettled and uneven in terms of the proportions of qualified staff, and before 2019 there was a downward trend in the number of workers in the sector qualified to Level 3. The *Early Years Workforce in England* report found that although qualification levels have begun to increase over the last few years, it has been at a very slow pace (EPI, 2019). Building upon this, despite the uptake in practitioners in all settings achieving a Level 3 qualification, the 2022 DfE report *The Early Years Workforce: Recruitment, Retention and Business Planning* stated that setting managers were still concerned about the limited number of quality (qualified and/or experienced) practitioners in the

sector (DfE, 2022), perhaps indicating that the rise in qualified workers had not addressed some staffing concerns.

Section 3: Sector challenges

Despite the importance of the early years sector in providing the best possible start for all children and helping to tackle myriad social issues, it is a sector that has faced considerable barriers and discontent in recent years. Challenges around recruitment, retention and funding are dealt with together as there are several related issues. Finding the right solution to fund a system that can attract and retain qualified, motivated staff who can provide the quality early years education that children need is difficult and yet to be solved. Nevertheless, the focus on ensuring that staff working in this sector have the appropriate skills and training to succeed must not be compromised. The review of the Level 3 criteria will provide the opportunity to discuss some of these concerns across a wide range of stakeholders and gather thoughts on additions/alternatives to the current scheme.

Recruitment, retention, and funding

One of the Social Mobility Commission's 7 key pillars for recovery is a renewed focus on pay and career structures within the early years sector as a solution to increasing staff attrition and difficulties with recruitment (Social Mobility Commission, 2021). Research by the DfE in 2021 showed that staff turnover has remained largely stable since 2018. Average turnover for group-based providers was 16%, whilst around one in five group-based providers had a staff turnover rate of over 25% (DfE, 2022).

The causes of the recruitment issues within the sector are not unique to England (Nutbrown, 2021). Common causes include a lack of career coherence, pay inequalities, poor working conditions and sector appreciation and these have led to widespread feelings of educators being undervalued and discontented (ibid). This discontent is, according to The Social Mobility Commission (2021), leading to more qualified and experienced staff leaving the sector. Whilst this situation has been evident for some time, it is suggested by the sector that it has worsened in recent years as funded provision has expanded and demand has soared whilst wages have stagnated.

The highest rate of turnover is amongst those qualified to Level 3 with one of the primary motivations given for leaving being low wages (DfE, 2022,). It was anticipated that the introduction of the Level 3 EYE qualification and the Level 6 early years teacher qualification would increase recruitment and wage potential of the sector by raising professional standards; but as the above demonstrates, this has yet to be realised. This has been hampered by funding challenges faced by childcare providers.

Early years provision is not a universal service funded by the state and providers are constrained by what they can charge based on what is 'affordable'. Research for the

Trade Union Congress (TUC, 2018) found that over a ten-year period, childcare costs had increased by 52% per week while nominal wages saw an increase of 17% over the same period. While this research was published in 2018, the current cost of living crisis sees costs across the board increasing while wages stagnate. The question of funding is always tricky; providers claim they can only afford younger, less qualified staff (ibid). Of particular concern is the rise of providers employing unqualified staff; according to The Sutton Trust, the proportion of unqualified staff increased by 16% in 2019 compared to the previous year (The Sutton Trust, 2020). This raises a real question about how the sector can ensure high-quality early years provision that has the necessary funding to attract and retain qualified, motivated professionals that will ensure young children have the best possible start in life. Recommendations offered by the TUC included one which involved employers playing a greater role through either subsidies or on-site facilities.

Prof. Chris Pascal and Prof. Tony Bertram, Directors at Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC), stressed the importance of investing in the workforce:

> "The costs of establishing and sustaining a highly qualified early years workforce should be seen as an investment in human capital for future generations and a signal of the importance given to securing social mobility for our left behind young children. There has never been a time when the case for investment in this vital sector of our economy has been more needed or more thoroughly evidenced" (CREC, 2022).

Furthermore, recent months have seen an increase in reports of nurseries and early years settings closing due to a shortage of staff and money (The Times, 2022), leading industry bodies say the sector is in "its most perilous state for 20 years". However, whilst there are several reports of such closures in the media this is yet to be corroborated with wider data.

Section 4: Methodology

This research project had four primary aims:

- To review the status of the Level 3 EYE criteria via engagement with key stakeholders to improve the quality and rigour of the criteria.
- To develop a revised criteria based on stakeholder feedback and user-tested recommendations.
- To provide recommendations on potential delivery models of the Level 3 EYE qualifications.
- To identify any other potential areas of future research.

The research design to achieve these aims was straightforward. The DfE requested evidence be gathered from eight key stakeholder groups:

- Practitioners, managers and owners (380), including Level 3 EYE practitioners working in childcare settings and childminders (221) and nursery owners/senior leaders and managers (159).
- Awarding organisations and training providers (184), including awarding organisations who set Level 3 qualifications (15) and training providers who offer Level 3 courses (169).
- Sector specialists and advocates (37), including Ofsted (2), early years membership organisations (12), academics (10) and local authorities (13).
- Parents and carers of children in settings (115).
- Other respondents to General Audience survey (44).

The figures in brackets show the number consulted with from each stakeholder group through either a focus group, in-depth interview or survey response. The total number of individuals consulted with via one of these methods was 760.

The research design was a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, depending on the participants. The qualitative aspect of the field work included both in-depth interviews (one-on-one and in some cases multiple representatives from a single organisation) and focus groups. Appendix A sets out for each stakeholder group the rationale for their input and a note about the specific approach for each group (this may cover methodological approaches such as quantitative and/or qualitative, as well as any information relevant to the sample).

Quantitative fieldwork

The quantitative aspect of the fieldwork involved two online surveys targeted at different audiences: one for a general audience and one for parents/carers. Each survey covered similar broad themes and topics, however they differed in language

and assumed knowledge depending on the target group. Each survey aimed to establish current knowledge of the Level 3 EYE criteria and delivery, areas of improvement and good practice, as well as gathering perspectives on current issues within the sector, such as qualification requirements, staff retention and pay. There were general questions regarding the impact of Covid-19 and the quality of SEND provision. Moreover, each survey captured general information about the participants; for parents this included how many children they have and how many hours of childcare each receives a week, and for practitioners this included job title.

The parents and carers survey included additional guidance on key terms and job titles to ensure comprehension (see Appendix B1). Building upon this, the parents and carers survey invited participants to give their perspectives on wider issues within the sector, such as who has primary responsibility for the academic, social, and emotional development of children, their willingness and ability to pay increased childcare fees for a higher qualified workforce and how satisfied they are generally with their childcare provision.

The surveys ran from 5–22 July 2022 and the number of responses is shown in Table 6. In total, there were 692 survey respondents.

Table 6 - Quantitative survey responses by stakeholder group

Survey	Stakeholder group	Number of responses
Parents and carers	Parents and carers of children in settings	100
General audience	Level 3 EYE practitioners working in childcare settings and childminders	217
General audience	Nursery owners/senior leaders and managers	157
General audience	Training providers who offer Level 3 EYE courses	161
General audience	Early years membership organisations	2
General audience	Academics	3
General audience	Local authorities	8
General audience	Other	44

Source: NCFE 2022

With regards to the survey analysis that is referenced in "Section 5: Main Findings", all figures and data in tables have been rounded to protect respondent anonymity. All percentage figures are based on rounded numbers.

Qualitative field work

A qualitative discussion guide, with specific question subsections depending on stakeholder group (see Appendices) was produced for both focus groups and in-depth interviews. The focus of the conversation was on existing criteria (such as likes and dislikes, omissions, what changes would people like to see). The question of delivery and what is effective was also covered, as was the question of SEND and whether SEND issues were currently adequately addressed in the curriculum. Upon completion of the literature review, the DfE requested further exploration of these particular topics.

Table 7shows the number of stakeholders that participated in either a focus group or in-depth interview during the fieldwork stage of the project. In total, 68 stakeholders were consulted face-to-face.

Table 7 - Face-to-face participation by stakeholder group

Stakeholder group	Number of participants
Parents/carers of children in settings	15
Level 3 EYE practitioners working in childcare settings and childminders	4
Nursery owners/senior leaders and managers	2
Awarding organisations who set Level 3 EYE qualifications	15
Training providers who offer Level 3 EYE courses	8
Early years membership organisations	10
Academics	7
Local authorities	5
Ofsted	2

Source: NCFE 2022

In carrying out this research, the standard Market Research Society guidelines were followed, and this was made clear to participants. They were also informed of their right to withdraw or amend anything they disclosed in the process of the interview or focus group. With permission from those taking part, all interviews and focus groups were recorded for the purpose of aiding notetaking and analysis. Recordings will be kept for 12 months from the completion of the project before deletion. Key points and significant quotations from interviews and focus groups were entered into an analysis grid set-up in Excel.

Once the analysis was completed, the revised criteria were presented in six user testing groups to gauge feedback on the revised proposals. Table 8shows the number of participants that took part in the user testing workshops by stakeholder group. In total, there were 32 user testing workshop participants.

Table 8 - User testing participation by stakeholder group

Stakeholder group	Number of participants
Parents/carers of children in settings	5
Level 3 EYE practitioners working in childcare settings and childminders	1
Nursery owners/senior leaders and managers	1
Awarding organisations who set Level 3 EYE qualifications	2
Training providers who offer Level 3 EYE courses	6
Early years membership organisations	6
Academics	4
Local authorities	5
Ofsted	2

Source: NCFE 2022

Section 5: Main findings

Sector perceptions: purpose and requirements

Whilst the primary aim of this project was the revision of the Level 3 EYE criteria, wider contextual insights into the sector were gained that also impacted the criteria revision. Primarily, focus group participants expressed confusion and a lack of clarity regarding the purpose of the sector; options given for the sector purpose was that it was a business, a tool to allow parents to work, an inequality leveller or purely for early education. Some participants stated that the lack of detail and specifics within the criteria did not help provide clarity on the sector's purpose; at present, the criteria are seen as too broad and open to interpretation, leading to inconsistencies in application. One participant commented that this confusion was compounded by a perceived lack of policy direction: "The fact that we have got to get a policy direction that isn't always clear about whether this is about early learning or whether it's about childcare for parents to work" (Academic 1).

This general lack of understanding of the sector, its requirements and purpose were echoed in the quantitative survey distributed amongst parents and carers. In this, when questioned on the qualification requirements for early years staff, 65% of respondents did not know the qualification requirements for a nursery manager. Of the 35% that believed they did know the qualification requirement, 57% (n=20) selected the correct option of Level 3, with the remaining 43% expecting a higher level of qualification (Level 4, 5 or 6). Of the parents and carers who said they did not know what qualification level nursery managers should hold, 85% (n=55) expected a Level 4 or higher. This lack of knowledge was replicated when respondents were asked to consider the qualification levels of Key People; 60% said that they did not know what qualification they should hold, and of these respondents a third (n=20) stated they expected a Key Person to hold at least a Level 4 qualification.

This disconnect between parents' and carers' expectations and wants for the early years sector and the current landscape was replicated once again when they were questioned on desired curriculum content. At present, much of the criteria's focus is on academic skills and school readiness, however parents and carers expressed a strong preference for an emphasis on social, emotional and communication development above academic development.

Parents' and carers' top three ranked topics for inclusion in the curriculum were:

1. Communication skills
2. Social skills
3. Growth as a well-rounded individual.

Parents and carers maintained this level of priority for emotional and social development in their other responses in the survey. When asked to consider the setting their children attend, the 100 respondents classed wellbeing measures (90%), social skills (90%), emotional intelligence skills (80%) and communication skills (80%) as more important than development of academic skills such as numeracy (65%) and literacy (65%). Further, parents and carers had a clear expectation that their Key Person would develop a bond with their child (85%).

Accordingly, readiness for school academically was the priority parents and carers ranked lowest, along with healthy living skills and numeracy skills. Moreover, when questioned on the purpose of the criteria, the lowest number of general audience respondents selected "academic development" (32%, n=190) or "preparing the child for school academically" (22%, n=135) as the primary purpose or aim of the criteria. Building upon this, only 3% of parents and carers stated they expected a setting to develop their child's literacy skills and 5% said the same for numeracy skills. It is possible the phrasing of the question in this instance has contributed to the low scores, as "literacy" and "numeracy" skills are perhaps more associated with traditional lessons as opposed to age-appropriate play and learning activities. This possibility is strengthened by the fact that 40% of parents and carers stated their early years setting was responsible for the educational development of their child.

While they had high expectations of early years settings and their workers, parents and carers, perhaps understandably, expressed a strong belief that they themselves were primarily responsible for their child's emotional and social development (65%, with only 5% placing the responsibility for this on the early years setting[1]). 40% of parents and carers surveyed stated they were responsible for their child's educational development. A large proportion of parents and carers also felt it was their responsibility to encourage their child's interests (95%) and continuing learning activities at home (85%). This feeling of personal responsibility did not appear affected by the hours of childcare they used per week, with 30% of all parents and carers surveyed using childcare for more than 30 hours a week.

Challenges facing the sector

As outlined above, the early years sector is facing challenges at present. This was also demonstrated in the survey data, with 94% (n=555) of respondents to the general survey stating they believed there were challenges facing the sector. The top three challenges facing the sector were as follows:

- Poor pay

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[1] 20% of respondents selected "family" as primarily responsible whilst the remaining 10% selected "other".

- Burnout/workload
- Difficulty recruiting staff

Furthermore, 74% (n=275) of early years practitioners, childminders, nursery owners or managers surveyed have considered leaving the sector/profession in the last 12 months. Of these, 75% gave 'poor pay' as a reason; 69% gave 'stress' and 'burnout/workload'; and 18% gave 'lack of career progression' and 'workplace conditions'.

There is synergy between the top reasons chosen for leaving the sector and the challenges facing the sector, with poor pay and burnout/workload being chosen by the largest proportion of respondents for each question.

Many of the survey respondents corroborate sentiments expressed in the background research as outlined above. The primary difference between the survey responses and the contextual research was that most respondents did not feel a lack of career options was a potential reason for leaving the sector: only 18% (n=50) of respondents thought this, with 69% (n=260) stating they had a clear idea of their career progression. Reasons for this are varied, but a possible explanation is that the impact of the top three reasons for considering leaving the sector are so immediate and profound that it renders career progression moot, or that there's a belief that these issues will be exacerbated with promotion. Despite this backdrop, 52% (n=195) of early years practitioners, childminders, nursery owners or managers stated they were satisfied working in the sector, which is perhaps partially attributable to the vocational nature of the sector.

Respect and value

A particular challenge facing the sector that was consistently raised in focus groups and interviews was the perceived lack of respect for the sector. "Hair or care" was a phrase that was frequently repeated in the focus groups undertaken with academics, membership organisations and early years professionals, with these groups interpreting this as a disparagement of the sector and indicative of prevailing attitudes in schools and colleges that early years training was only appropriate for those who are not "traditionally academically" inclined. There was a strong feeling that the sector is not seen or valued as a profession: "It's very much seen as a second class. I don't think it's seen as a profession" (Membership Organisation). Staff attrition was seen as linked to this, as those with ambition move out of the sector: "I'm going to top up to a degree to work in a primary school for five to ten years, then I'm going to work for Ofsted" (Practitioner).

> "I think that shows the real disconnect between people's understanding of how actually transformative early childhood education it is. And I think that it's a lot.

It's a large part about even language and the signalling... I think there's a real signalling kind of issue as well associated with how we talk about educators. They're not […] they're not childcare, they're educators" (Membership Organisation 2).

Whilst childminders were not heavily represented within the survey sample, there was a strong sentiment that their role within the sector was not as valued as other practitioners within the wider sector.

"Regarding childminders specifically, although we have the same criteria to meet and often the same if not higher qualifications than nursery staff, we are regarded poorly by the governing sectors and therefore by parents. We are more than glorified babysitters" (Childminder 1).

"All through Covid–19 as childminders who continuously worked, we were not greatly supported or treated as equals in the early years sector. We were always disregarded but expected to do the same if not more!!" (Childminder 2).

Additionally, it must be noted that no childminders took the opportunity to take part in a focus group or in-depth interview.

The debate around minimum entry requirements to the workforce reflected a desire to challenge perceptions of early years education as a non-academic profession. Although some participants recognised that the Level 2 requirement presented a barrier to some potential entrants to the profession, most participants in the focus groups and interviews supported the maintenance of the Level 2 requirement as the lack of a minimum requirement would add to the perception of a low value profession.

"Generally speaking, we don't question this for primary school. So why do we question this for early years? And that shows a clear understanding that they haven't the foggiest idea of what you do in the classroom" (Academic 3).

"We should be levelling up, so we've already levelled down because we couldn't meet the criteria that the government set, which is a real indictment of our education system. Our children deserve people that are competent at what we judge as our state of competence at Level 2 and Level 3. No, not everybody will get the GCSE, so we've had to look at the Functional Skills, but we shouldn't be levelling down" (Academic 1).

"We've been working for 20 years to raise the qualification standard, the status of people coming through and the fact that young people are told at school: "You're no good at this, and the others are going do hair or care". And

if you can't do that, go and do early years. You know, our youngest citizens deserve very high quality staff and we do that by raising the status and the quality of the stepping stones in that career" (Academic 2).

"The sector needs more academics – colleges and careers advisers still only push 'less academic' learners to 'hair and care'" (Member organisation 4).

"Because at the end of the day, what we're doing is we are working with the bedrock, the foundations of our society. They are our next generations to come. You know ... I always look at it like building a wall. We're giving them foundation stones. Those foundation stones have got a few cracks in them. The more holes they've got in them, the more wobbly that wall is going to be as we try and build on it. You know that that's how I see working with young children. It's just I can't stress the importance of it [enough] really" (Membership Organisation 5).

However, this sentiment was not reflected in the general survey. In this, 63% (n=235) of early years practitioners, childminders, nursery owners or managers respondents did not agree with the Level 2 requirements and only 31% (n=115) agreed, with the rest stating they did not know their opinion on the matter.

When responses to this question were split out into job category, 58% of nursery practitioners and 73% of nursery owners/managers did not agree with the Level 2 requirements and of these, just 9% worked in either a "nursery class attached to a primary or infant school" or "reception class". This could be attributable to the differences in job pressures faced by different respondents. With recruitment being a primary concern for the sector, and nursery managers are the ones most likely responsible for this, it is understandable that their focus is on reducing barriers to employment and ensuring a viable business. Additionally, given 50% of parents surveyed stated they could not afford to pay more than they already did if practitioners in a setting were qualified to a higher level, there is little motivation for nursery managers or owners to advocate for higher entry tariffs to the workforce.

Proposed criteria

In relation to the criteria specifically, 50% (n=295) of the general audience survey stated they believed the criteria to be fit for purpose, with 81% (n=480) also stating that they would not remove anything from the criteria given the opportunity. Many of the suggestions for improving the criteria were linked to the existing frameworks; participants generally expressed a desire for further detail and specificity within the criteria to deepen knowledge and understanding. The areas respondents cited most frequently as requiring expansion were child development, workplace skills and practice competence.

Child development

It was widely agreed that a robust and practical knowledge of child development was foundational for an early years practitioner – however, at present, this section of the criteria is seen as lacking sufficient detail and unlikely to provide the knowledge base required. More specifically, respondents stated that the lack of age segmentation in general and the little to no mention of the specific needs of babies and new-borns was a fundamental flaw in the criteria that allowed for significant variance in the knowledge different learners gained from studying a Level 3 EYE qualification. Furthermore, participants stated a disconnect between theory and practice was inherent in the Level 3 EYE criteria. The criteria as they stand fail to adequately articulate how theory is put into practice within a setting. Specifically, participants stated that newly qualified Level 3 learners did not always understand how a profound knowledge of child development was integral to other practice elements such as safeguarding, health and safety and SEND identification; for example, understanding weaning stages to prevent choking accidents. Participants also asked for theorists or developmental models to be recommended or, if possible, mandated within the criteria to ensure teaching was up to date and to aid in industry standardisation.

These views were broadly echoed in the quantitative survey. 50% (n=295) of respondents stated there was a need for a greater focus on neurological and physical development in the criteria. There was also a general recognition that child development was fundamental to the criteria. When questioned on the purpose of the criteria, the top three responses from practitioners were:

- To support children's development (89%, n=525)
- To identify potential developmental issues and identify potential additional needs (72%, n=425)
- To support children's emotional development (71%, n=420).

Given the significance of child development to practice and the criteria, it is apparent that greater detail and age-related breakdowns are needed in the criteria to ensure a solid holistic basis for practice.

Workplace skills

The next identified area of development within the criteria has been broadly categorised as "workplace skills". This can be defined as any skill or knowledge necessary for a learner to possess upon completion of a Level 3 EYE qualification to be "workplace ready". 66% (n=245) of the general audience surveyed stated that there were skills gained through experience that were not taught in the current qualification that were necessary to practice (only 11%, n=45, responded "no" to this

question). Focus group participants frequently stated that Level 3 graduates had a lack of understanding of the different roles within a nursery, did not understand their own role in a setting and did not understand how the nursery functioned as an overall organisation. Moreover, they pointed to a lack of detail in the current criteria regarding professional networks and teams associated with early years practice, commenting that typically learners are not aware of various support teams or professional bodies they would potentially work with in their practice (e.g., social workers, child protection teams, interpreters, etc). Not only was there a lack of detail regarding these networks, focus group participants stated the current criteria did not provide enough guidance on how to build professional relationships. Finally, numerous focus groups commented on the lack of knowledge regarding preparation for and engagement with Ofsted, and that practitioners were unaware of how to justify and explain their practice in an inspection setting effectively. Essentially, participants emphasised that the criteria must prepare an individual for the reality of working in an early years setting, and that at present they did not: "Some Level 3 students have never changed a nappy, never made a bottle and don't know about weaning" (Practitioner 4).

Practice competence

Whilst it relates to workplace skills, we define practice competence in this instance as knowledge and skills used in day-to-day practice, such as curriculum development, play activities and knowledge of relevant legislation and responsibilities. The focus groups identified that relationship building (with both the child and the family), safeguarding knowledge and responsibilities and SEND identification were key skills that were missing from the criteria. The importance placed on safeguarding and health and safety knowledge by parents in their survey responses cannot be understated; 91% (n=91) of respondents stated that they expected a Level 3 EYE qualification to prepare learners to "safeguard and promote health and safety of children", whilst "to keep my child safe" was the top response from parents when questioned on their expectations of the setting and the Key Person. In relation to curriculum planning, focus group respondents felt there should be more explicit linkage to the EYFS for older children (those aged 3-5) and more content around curriculum development and planning, specifically the ability to adapt content to suit the needs and interests of individual children. Survey respondents also valued this, as 76% (n=450) of practitioners stated that "how to adapt the curriculum to a child's interests and needs" was an expectation they had of a Level 3 EYE qualification, with 84% (n=84) of parents surveyed also stating that this should be more explicit within the criteria.

Delivery

In addition to examining the criteria, the project aimed to garner insight regarding delivery of Level 3 EYE qualifications. Both focus group participants and survey respondents expressed a strong preference for greater standardisation regarding the delivery of Level 3 EYE qualifications to raise standards within the sector: "Homogeneity as a baseline and then topping up with flexibility" (Academic 4).

Participants stated that greater guidance on placement hours, placement type (in terms of different settings used), how settings were selected for placements and how progress on placements was monitored were all necessary changes. 20% of the general survey respondents stated that the qualification should have 750+ placement hours as standard, with other respondents stating that mandatory hours should be increased (see Table 9). Furthermore, focus group participants wanted learners to undertake placements in a variety of settings in order to fully experience and appreciate the different roles available to them in the sector.

Table 9: Number of placement hours required to qualify

Number of placement hours respondent thinks should be required to qualify as an early years educator	Response rate
750+	20%
651-750	9%
551-650	8%
451-550	8%
351-450	9%
251-350	9%
151-250	9%
1-150	8%
No hours required	2%
Don't know	18%

Source: NCFE, General Audience Survey Responses, 2022 (n=590)

Further to this, focus group participants stated that the various qualifications within the sector lack parity and that standards would be raised if this were embedded going forwards. The example given was the current Level 3 criteria does not map onto the QAA Level 4 requirements. Finally, participants voiced support for independent assessment of Level 3 learners to aid in quality assurance:

> "I would argue for independent practical assessment of learners – a team of assessors who are themselves at least at degree level (currently assessors

only have to be at Level 3 to assess at Level 3). Independent assessors would be paid for their time, not the outcome of the visit. Currently training providers and colleges are financially incentivised for learners to pass qualifications at Level 3" (Membership Organisation 5).

Equality, diversity, and inclusion

The topic of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) was consistently raised by most participants in this project as being of primary importance to them within early years provision. Over 80% of general survey participants stated special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) identification and practice should be included in the criteria (the highest of all options) and 82% (n=82) of parents also stated there was a need for greater focus on SEND identification and inclusion. 49% of the general audience surveyed also stated equity and inclusive practice were missing from the criteria.

Table 10: Additional areas to include in Level 3 EYE qualification

Additional areas respondents think should be included in a Level 3 Early Years qualification	Response rate
How to recognise and work with children with SEND	81%
How to adapt curriculum to a child's interest and needs	76%
Neurological and physical development	50%
Equity, equality, and diversity	49%
Theoretical approaches to attachment, development, and Early Years education	48%
Other, please specify	18%

Source: NCFE, General Audience Survey Responses, 2022 (n=590)

Whilst there is scope and clearly a desire from participants to include EDI as a topic within the criteria, steps must be taken to ensure this does not become a specialist qualification. Hence, participants stated that EDI should become a thread running throughout the criteria, ensuring it is embedded in all topics and encouraging a culture of high-quality, inclusive practice. Moreover, participants commented that attention should not just be paid to the known protected characteristics, but that the criteria should include other issues that may impact a child's development, such as socioeconomic background and individual circumstances. Despite the need for broad awareness of EDI and inclusive practice, specific references to speech, language and communication needs were made throughout the project. Specific focus on speech, language and communication was felt to be necessary due to children's communication skills worsening during the Covid-19 pandemic and because delays in these areas can be early indicators of other additional needs.

Professionalisation and skills gaps

Given the scope of the research, we also identified areas for future consideration and potential skills gaps. Participants stated the need for more consistent and targeted CPD dependent on the needs of the local area or setting. Understanding Makaton and paediatric first aid was also cited consistently amongst focus group participants as valuable areas of CPD that should be more formally endorsed and encouraged.

Building upon this, focus group participants said that particular values and behaviours were expected within the sector, despite there being no provision for encouraging or developing them. Practitioners in focus groups stated that given the fact the sector is largely female, there was a perception that "natural", "female" skills of care, empathy and kindness were a given. There was a strong feeling that this was not the case and that these attributes could and should be developed via the use of effective mentoring, reflective practice and critical thinking within the qualification delivery.

Finally, a specific skill that participants identified as missing from the criteria was that of leadership. This encompassed not just leadership in the traditional sense, but also the ability to lead a group, room or setting. We were told that newly qualified learners lacked the confidence to be able to perform their role in all environments, including in front of other adults and parents, whilst also sometimes being unable to have difficult discussions with other practitioners and parents when necessary. This perceived lack of confidence amongst the workforce was a consistent theme of the focus groups and can be linked back to the mentioned perceived low skill set of the sector. Respondents also stated they believed this lack of confidence was due to the gendered nature of the work and their belief that the majority of the workforce were from a working-class background. There was a desire to build this confidence by encouraging learners to view themselves as an advocate for both themselves and the children in their care.

Section 6: Recommendations

Proposed criteria

Methodology

Key members of the project team held a workshop to discuss the main findings from the research and how the criteria should be amended to take the findings into consideration. One of the key themes emerging from the research was the need for more detail in the criteria to ensure clarity and consistency across all Level 3 EYE qualifications. Stakeholders had argued this was not the case currently, and this was highlighted by the varying levels of competency among practitioners who had completed the qualification. If this detail was not to be included within the criteria, a supporting guidance document would be necessary to ensure this clarity and consistency.

During the workshop, the Level 2 EYP criteria were scrutinised, and we determined that the criteria headings and underlying sub-criteria did contain the level of detail needed for the revision of the Level 3 EYE criteria. Given the Level 2 EYP criteria had undergone a similar review more recently (DfE, 2018), we felt that these criteria should be taken into consideration as a baseline for the new Level 3 EYE criteria. This view was further supported by feedback from stakeholders who felt there was disjoint between the levels. Basing the Level 3 EYE criteria on the Level 2 EYP criteria would help to ensure seamless progression. It would also help to ensure there were no gaps in knowledge for those who had studied the Level 3 without previously completing Level 2, as stakeholder feedback suggested this was another reason for gaps in knowledge for some practitioners entering the workforce.

The outcome of the workshop was that there were two options for resolving this need for more detail and clarity within the criteria:

- To keep the same criteria headings, add in additional sub criteria as appropriate based on the research and produce supporting guidance to provide the extra guidance as desired by stakeholders.
- To base the Level 3 EYE criteria on the Level 2 EYP criteria, add in additional sub criteria as appropriate based on the research and ensure that the assessment language used was appropriate for Level 3 standards.

These options were presented to the DfE, and it was agreed that the Level 3 EYE criteria would be based on Level 2 EYP criteria for the reasons highlighted above.

Key proposed changes

The most significant changes to the criteria can be summarised as follows:

- Expansion of the criteria subheadings to mirror those in the Level 2 EYP criteria.
- The inclusion of SEND as a topic with a subheading within the criteria.
- A greater focus on the application of theoretical knowledge to practice.
- The terminology in general has been updated and specific mention of "babies" and "children" added to ensure the needs of children of all ages are considered in relation to each section.
- Explicit inclusion of the emotional wellbeing of the child.
- A focus on the voice of the child and the role of the practitioner as an advocate of that voice.
- Specific mention of the learner's expected roles and responsibilities in the workplace.
- Specific mention of inclusive practice and ensuring assessment and activities are appropriate and relate to a child's interests, developmental stage, and needs.
- Updated safeguarding criteria and greater detail included in relation to health and safety responsibilities, specifically allergies, illness, and the application of medicine.

In line with the findings from the surveys, nothing has been removed from the current criteria; rather the content has been reorganised under new subheadings and expanded to include greater detail. The full criteria can be found below.

Proposed criteria

1.   Safeguarding
    1.1.   Identify and act upon own role and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and security, including child protection, reporting and confidentiality of information.
    1.2.   Understand safeguarding policies and procedures, changes to legislation including child protection, recognise when a child is in danger or at risk of abuse, and know how to act to protect them.
            Types of abuse include neglect, physical, emotional, and sexual.

2.   Support and promote children's early education and development
    2.1.   Understand the expected patterns of babies and children's development from ages:
            -    0-2
            -    2-3

- 3-5
- and an understanding of further development from 5 to 7.

Children's development patterns to include:
- cognitive
- speech, language, and communication development
- physical
- emotional
- neurological and brain development.

2.2. Understand the significance of attachment and how to promote it effectively.

2.3. Understand a range of underpinning theories, philosophical approaches and research impacting early years pedagogy and how to apply these in practice.

2.4. Explain and analyse how baby's and children's learning and development can be affected by their stage of development and individual circumstances, such as moving school, birth of a sibling, family breakdown, and adoption and care, including the significance of adverse childhood experiences.

2.5. Analyse and explain how cultural differences and family circumstances can impact on baby's and children's learning and development.

2.6. Understand the importance to baby's and children's holistic development of:
- speech, language, and communication
- personal, social, and emotional development
- physical development.

2.7. Understand the development of emergent literacy and numeracy in children from birth to the age of seven years. Use strategies to support emerging literacy and numeracy.

2.8. Understand the potential effects of, and how to prepare and support babies and young children through, transitions and significant events in their lives. Transitions and significant events include:
- moving to school
- starting and moving through day care
- birth of a sibling
- moving home
- living outside of the home
- family breakdown
- loss of significant people
- moving between settings and carers.

2.9. Understand the current early education curriculum requirements as mandated through the Early Years Foundation Stage.

2.10. Promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice.

2.11. Understand when a child is in need of additional support.

3. Wellbeing

3.1. Understand the impact of health and wellbeing on baby's and children's development. Interact with children to positively impact their health and wellbeing.

3.2. Understand and use current dietary guidance for early years and explain why it is important for babies and young children to have a healthy balanced diet and be physically active.

3.3. Promote health and wellbeing in settings by implementing strategies to encourage babies and young children to:
- consume healthy and balanced meals, snacks, and drinks appropriate for their age
- be physically active through planned and spontaneous activity throughout the day, both indoors and outdoors.

3.4. Understand and demonstrate how and when to share information with parents/carers about the importance of healthy balanced diets, looking after teeth, and being physically active.

3.5. Explain, plan, and carry out respectful care routines appropriate to the development, stage, dignity and needs of the child, including:
- eating (feeding and weaning/complimentary feeding)
- nappy changing procedures
- potty/toilet training
- care of skin, teeth, and hair
- rest and sleep provision.

3.6. Understand the importance of, and promote the emotional wellbeing of, babies and children.

4. Communication

4.1. Understand and demonstrate how to communicate with all children in ways that will be understood, including verbal and non-verbal communication.

4.2. Understand and demonstrate how to extend all children's development and learning through verbal and non-verbal communication.

4.3. Understand and demonstrate ways to communicate with all children appropriate for all their stages of development, including those for whom English is an additional language (EAL) or who have delayed speech.

4.4. Be able to identify delays in communication development and describe appropriate support services for the baby or young child.

4.5. Support and promote baby's and children's speech, language, and communication development.

4.6. Demonstrate and implement a range of communication methods to exchange information with children and adults.

5. Health and safety

5.1. Know the legal requirements and guidance on health and safety, security, and confidentiality of information.

5.2. Identify and act upon own responsibilities in relation to health and safety, security, confidentiality of information, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

5.3. Carry out risk assessment and risk management in line with policies and procedures.

5.4. Understand how to respond to accidents and emergency situations:
- a baby or young child requiring urgent medical/dental attention
- a non-medical incident or emergency
- identifying risks and hazards.

5.5. Demonstrate skills and knowledge for the prevention and control of infection. Prevention and control of infection including:
- hand washing
- food hygiene
- dealing with spillages safely
- safe disposal of waste
- using correct personal protective equipment
- knowledge of common childhood illnesses and immunisation
- exclusion periods for infectious diseases.

5.6. Maintain accurate and coherent records and reports and share information, when appropriate, to ensure the needs of all children are met. Records and reports include:
- medication requirements
- special dietary needs
- planning
- observation and assessment
- health, safety, and security
- accidents and near misses
- daily registers.

5.7. Understand and explain the work setting's procedures for receiving, storing, recording, administering and the safe disposal of medicines.

5.8. Use equipment, furniture, and materials safely, following the manufacturer's instructions and setting's requirements. Assist others in the safe use of equipment, furniture, and materials.

5.9. Identify the signs and symptoms which may indicate that a child is injured, unwell (including common childhood illnesses and allergies) or in need of urgent medical/dental attention and take relevant action.

5.10. Understand and encourage children to:
- be aware of personal safety and the safety of others
- develop personal hygiene practices (including oral hygiene).

6. Support children with special educational needs and disabilities.

6.1. Understand and explain statutory guidance in relation to the care and education of children with special educational needs and disabilities.

6.2. Implement and analyse approaches to developing partnership working (including parents/carers) in relation to working effectively with children with special educational needs and disabilities.

6.3. Plan the assessment, planning, implementation, and reviewing (the graduated approach) of each baby's and young child's individual plan for their care and participation.

6.4. Promote and encourage a working environment that values and respects the developmental needs and stages of babies and children.

6.5. Understand and explain what internal and external specialist aids, resources, and equipment are available for the children in the setting and how to use these safely.

7. Plan and provide effective care, teaching, learning, and assessment that enables children to progress and prepares them for school

7.1. Plan and lead activities, purposeful play opportunities, and educational programmes which include the learning and development areas of current early education curriculum requirements. To include:
- communication and language (extending vocabulary, language structure, and dialogue, for example)
- physical development
- personal, social, and emotional development
- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design.

7.2. Know and demonstrate when, why, and how to carry out meaningful assessment.

7.3. Ensure plans fully reflect the stage of development, individual needs and circumstances of children, provide consistent care, and respond quickly to the needs and interests of the child.

7.4. Identify and plan learning experiences, environments, activities, and play opportunities (both indoors and outdoors), and educational

programmes (both adult-led and child-initiated) to support children's holistic development through a range of play, creativity, social development, and learning, appropriate to the age, stage and needs of individual and groups of children.

7.5. Engage in effective strategies to develop and extend children's learning and thinking, including sustained shared thinking.

7.6. Support children's group learning and socialisation.

7.7. Support children to manage their own behaviour in relation to others through co-regulation.

7.8. Plan and implement activities relating to the statutory framework and curriculum, including the learning and development requirements for babies and young children that must be implemented by the setting.

7.9. Understand how to observe within the current early education curriculum framework using a range of techniques.

7.10. Carry out and record observational assessment accurately, plan and record the outcomes, and share results accurately and confidentially in line with expected statutory framework and setting's requirements.

7.11. Understand and embed inclusive practice ensuring that every child is included and supported by identifying the needs, interests, and stages of development of individual children.

7.12. Understand and analyse the key stages in the observation, formative and summative assessment, tracking children's progress and planning cycle, and understand the value of observation for:
- the child
- the parents/carers
- the early years setting in planning the next steps.

7.13. Discuss children's progress and plan the next stages in their learning with the key person, colleagues, parents and/or carers.

8.   Work in partnership with the key person, colleagues, parents and/or carers or other professionals

8.1. Work co-operatively with colleagues, other professionals, and agencies to meet the needs of babies and young children and enable them to progress.

8.2. Work in partnership with parents and/or carers to help them recognise and value the significant contributions they make to the child's health, well-being, learning and development.

8.3. Encourage parents and/or carers to take an active role in the baby's/child's care, play, learning, and development.

8.4. Understand and explain the roles and responsibilities of other agencies and professionals that work with and support your setting, both statutory and non-statutory.

8.5. Understand the importance of being an advocate for the voice of the child, parental/carer engagement, the home learning environment, and their roles in early learning.

9. Own role, practice, and development

9.1. Demonstrate a good command of the English language in spoken and written form.

9.2. Understand and demonstrate the importance of reflective practice and continuous professional development to improve own skills and early years practice.

9.3. Engage in continuous professional development and reflective practice to improve own skills, practice, and subject knowledge.

9.4. Understand and explain own role, responsibilities and expected behaviours, and the roles of colleagues in the setting and team.

9.5. Understand and explain how to access (and update if necessary) workplace policies and procedures and your own responsibilities and accountabilities relating to these.

9.6. Understand and explain how your behaviour can impact on babies and children and influence them.

9.7. Understand and demonstrate own responsibilities when following procedures in the work setting for:
- reporting
- whistleblowing
- protecting and promoting the welfare of children
- safeguarding
- confidentiality
- information sharing
- use of technology
- referring development concerns
- protecting themselves, for example media and online presence.

9.8. Seek out feedback, mentoring, and/or supervision to identify and support areas for development, goals, and career opportunities.

9.9. Understand the importance of promoting diversity, equality, and inclusion, fully reflecting cultural differences and family circumstances

A comparison of the current and proposed criteria can be found in Appendix C.

Building upon this and given the focus on child safety as a key concern of parent or carer participants – as well as the occasional mention of the risk of choking in an early years setting by practitioners – we suggest that specific guidance on food

preparation, safety and weaning be added to the criteria. Potential wording of this addition is as follows:

- Understand the different stages of weaning and how to prepare food that is suitable for the age and development of babies and children. Know the most up to date advice on weaning provided by the NHS.
- Know that mealtimes can be a high-risk environment for babies and young children in regard to choking.
- Understand the signs of choking and that choking can be completely silent, therefore children should be supervised closely when eating.
- Know how to prepare food so it is safe for the age and development of the baby / child referring to the most up to date government guidance.

Moreover, given the issues mentioned about standardisation and quality, we also recommend that explicit reference to additional guidance, such as the EYFS or the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework, should be included within the criteria at relevant points.

User testing

A requirement of the project was to test the suggested criteria with key stakeholders. All focus group and interview participants were given the opportunity to state their interest and willingness to participate in user testing sessions. They were then given the opportunity to sign up for one of six sessions that took place between 16 and 18 August 2022.

These sessions included an abridged outline of the key results from the project, an explanation of the remit of the proposals, and the reasons for the criteria structure selected before inviting participants to state their preference on the wording of some specific subsections and vote on whether a specific section should be added to the criteria.

Initially, participants were asked to vote on the following phrasing options for a specific subsection within the 'Support and promote children's early education and development' criteria:

Option A

Understand the expected patterns of children's development from birth to 5 years and have an understanding of further development from age 5 to 7.

Children's development patterns to include:

- cognitive

- speech, language, and communication development
- physical
- emotional
- neurological and brain development.

Option B

Understand the expected patterns of babies and children's development from ages

- 0-2
- 2-3
- 3-5
- And an understanding of further development from 5 to 7.

Children's development patterns to include:

- cognitive
- speech, language, and communication development
- physical
- emotional
- neurological and brain development.

Each of the options are different from the current criteria as "literacy and numeracy" skills have been removed from the list of development patterns to focus on innate development as opposed to skills acquisition. Option B offers greater age segmentation in line with feedback from the field research. There was a clear preference for option B with 97% (n=31) of participants choosing this.

Participants were also asked to express their preference for the following phrasing options:

Option A

Understand systematic synthetic phonics in the teaching of reading, and a range of strategies for developing early literacy and mathematics.

Option B

Understand the development of emergent literacy and numeracy in children from birth to the age of seven years. Use strategies to support emerging literacy and numeracy. There was a clear preference for option B, with 90% (n=29) of participants choosing this.

From this, participants were asked to rank the suggested criteria headings in order of importance to them. The reasons for this were twofold; on the one hand it would provide a steer in terms of finalising the order of the reviewed criteria, whilst also indicating areas of review if the criteria ultimately were to be condensed. The results of the ranking are as follows:

- safeguarding
- support and promote children's early education and development
- wellbeing
- communication
- health and safety
- support children with special educational needs and disabilities
- plan and provide effective care, teaching, learning and assessment that enables children to progress and prepares them for school
- work in partnership with the key person, colleagues, parents and/or carers, or other professionals
- own role, practice, and development.

Appendix C lists the full criteria headings with the associated subheadings in the order above determined by the user testing workshop ranking.

Perhaps the most significant question asked of the user testing groups was whether the criteria required the addition of a "Professional Skills Profile" in order to ensure desired behaviours, ethics, and values amongst learners. The suggested skills profile was taken from the Level 3 Apprenticeship Framework for consistency across the sector. The suggested behaviours and values are:

1. Care and compassion - provide the very best childcare to every child every day combined with the ability to professionally challenge poor practice.
2. Being team-focused - work effectively with colleagues and other professionals and support the learning and development of others through mentoring and sharing of professional expertise and experience.
3. Honesty, trust, and integrity - develop trust by working in a confidential, ethical, and empathetic manner with a common sense and professional attitude.
4. Commitment to improving the outcomes for children through inspiration and child centred care and education.
5. Work in an anti-discriminatory way by being aware of differences and ensuring all children have equal access to opportunities to learn, develop and reach their potential.

6. Working practice takes into account fundamental British values including democracy, the rule of the law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
7. Model and promote positive behaviours expected of children.

Results were more split when compared to the other poll questions asked in the user testing workshops and although two thirds (66%, n=21) of participants believed that the Professional Skills Profile section should be added to the Level 3 EYE criteria, one third of participants believed that it should not be added.

In the ensuing discussion, participants offered several insights regarding the inclusion of a Professional Skills Profile in the Level 3 EYE criteria. Primarily, it was suggested that as this is already included in the apprenticeship framework, there is a risk of duplication of assessment for these learners. Continuing in this vein, it was questioned how some of the suggested behaviours could be accurately and effectively assessed given they are largely subjective and intangible. It was suggested that if not included in the criteria, this skills profile could inform a learner's reflective practice on placement; it could also be used before enrolment to ensure suitability for the course or it could be informally assessed on placement via the use of a statement of competence.

Finally, participants were asked to state their belief that the reviewed criteria as presented were fit for purpose: 93% (n=30) of participants answered yes, whilst just 7% (n=2) answered no.

Delivery

Recommendations from stakeholders regarding the optimal delivery model of a Level 3 EYE qualification were predominantly focussed on the use and purpose of placements. As above, all participants expressed a strong desire for greater placement hours. Further to this, they emphasised the need for further guidance regarding mentoring and support on placement, ensuring only high-quality settings were used for placements and that learners, where possible, should be exposed to a variety of placement settings. Mandating guidelines around placement is particularly difficult given the fact apprentices are limited in their options in terms of placement hours and ability to experience a variety of placements. Hence, strong guidance including recommendations about including placement hours, mentoring processes, and selection of settings as suitable for placements, should be produced to ensure placements assist learners in their knowledge and skill acquisition.

Moreover, to further assist the raising of standards, quality assessments of learners should be carried out by independent assessors who are qualified to above Level 3, given the perceived financial incentive for colleges and training providers to have a successful learner cohort.

"I would argue for independent practical assessment of learners - a team of assessors who are themselves at least at degree level (currently assessors only have to be at Level 3 to assess at Level 3). Independent assessors would be paid for their time, not the outcome of the visit. Currently training providers and colleges are financially incentivised for learners to pass qualifications at Level 3." (Membership Organisation 5)

Professionalisation and skills gaps

Throughout the project several suggestions were made that, whilst not appropriate for inclusion in the Level 3 EYE criteria, could be beneficial to the sector more widely. Primarily, we recommend that, like teachers, Level 3 graduates should have a year as newly qualified practitioners where, whilst able to practice, they continue to receive support and mentorship from more experienced peers, whilst also undertaking additional CPD courses to specialise in the needs of either their setting or local area. Moreover, several areas of CPD were identified as being of particular benefit to the sector that practitioners should be encouraged to undertake; Makaton and paediatric first aid were cited consistently as examples of this. It is apparent from the breadth of topics already included in the Level 3 EYE criteria, in addition to the suggested areas of CPD, that the skills needed to be a high-quality early years practitioner are extensive and as such, a Level 3 EYE qualification must be seen as an entry point to the sector, not the sole requirement.

Finally, we also recommend that Industry Champions are introduced to raise standards, quality, and esteem across the sector. We also suggest an awareness campaign with colleges, careers guidance departments, and training providers to counter misinformation regarding the perceived "low value" or "non-academic" nature of the sector. We noticed that no parents in the survey perceived the sector as unskilled.

Section 7: Conclusion

To conclude, the early years sector is one that is clearly facing a time of change and challenge. However, throughout the course of this project, the passion and investment of practitioners, parents, and stakeholders in high quality early years provision and their commitment to achieving it was clear.

A robust set of criteria is the foundation to high quality provision. At present, the criteria do not adequately reflect the needs of the early years sector. By updating terminology, adding depth and detail, aligning the Level 3 EYE criteria headings with the recently reviewed Level 2 EYP criteria and redressing some concerns about topic omissions from the criteria, we believe that the revised criteria will provide the foundation of knowledge required by the sector. In addition to this, steps must be taken to ensure quality and standardisation across the sector, whilst also ensuring placements are structured to give learners the practical knowledge and mentorship required to develop into an outstanding practitioner.

As stated, the Level 3 EYE criteria and associated qualifications should be seen as foundational; they are an entry point to the industry and should be built upon by continual upskilling and CPD.

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Appendix A

EY membership organisations

Purpose:

There are several organisations working in the early years sector that represent staff working in the sector. These organisations tend to be very passionate and vocal about the sector and what is in the best interests of both early years practitioners and the children they look after; consequently, they bring a lot of expertise. Consulting with these also makes it easier to gain sector acceptance further down the line if any changes are introduced.

Approach:

The approach for early years organisations was straightforward. The Research and Insight Team had list of named individuals, all with expertise in the field of early years/childhood development and representing staff working in the sector. The target was 5-10 early years organisations. The team approached all individuals/organisations named on the list and offered them the opportunity to take part in a focus group or an interview.

Nursery leaders and managers (20-30) and Level 3 Practitioners in early years settings (or self-employed) (30-60)

Purpose:

Practitioners have direct, first-hand experience of delivering what they have learnt through their Level 3 qualifications to young children. They will know better than anybody what works well, what perhaps could do with tightening and the question of what they have learnt since qualifying and joining the sector that they were maybe not prepared for. As well as practitioners, we also spoke with nursery owners and managers to get their thoughts on these questions as well as their experience of running childcare settings, staffing and their experience and development.

Approach:

The methodological approach to this group was to employ a mixed quantitative-qualitative approach. A quantitative survey that will speak to both practitioners as well as senior leaders/managers, with some questions tailored specifically for the latter, was developed This survey was distributed online through various networks, including the early years organisations, CACHE Alumni and Campaign for Learning.

In addition to the quantitative survey, focus groups for senior leaders/managers were undertaken. Participants were recruited from the quantitative survey, which mentioned the opportunity to take part in a focus group giving them the opportunity to explore the issues raised in more detail.

Academics

Purpose:

Academics have a great deal of expertise in their subject area, which means they are very valuable to engage the process and can provide a perspective independent from the experiences of practitioners or policymakers.

Approach:

The approach for academics was straightforward. The Research and Insight Team had a list of named individuals, all with expertise in the field of early years/childhood development.

Local Authorities

Purpose:

Local Authorities act in an advisory capacity for early years settings in their locality. They have a good understanding of the localised market; the range of settings and the sustainability as well as the diverse range of settings of the workforce. They identify localised training needs and provide for those skills gaps. This includes a localised offer to support continuous professional development and facilitation of early years intervention strategies.

Approach:

A list of named individuals representing a range of locations across England was compiled and those individuals invited to participate in focus groups or interviews.

Parents/carers of children in childcare settings

Purpose:

As part of this exercise another interested party is parents/carer of children in childcare settings. It is useful to understand from this group what their expectations are of the staff looking after their children, what they actually know about the learning and development they receive (and how this differs from their expectations), as well as any thoughts around delivery.

Approach:

For this group, also, a mixed quantitative-qualitative methodology was used. A quantitative online survey consisting of mainly closed questions, making it straightforward and relatively quick to fill, was developed. The only stipulation on the sample was that they are parents/carers who have children that use some form of childcare part- or full-time and are based in England. The survey was distributed through the various networks involved with this research and was also be shared online through social media forum such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter encouraging parents/carers to take part and have their voice heard. Through both the survey and word of mouth, (again) via the networks, interest was sought for participants for focus groups, which explored the themes touched on in the survey in more depth as well discussing questions that are easier to broach in a qualitative rather than quantitative setting.

Awarding Organisations who offer L3 qualifications

Purpose:

Awarding organisations (AOs) are the organisations responsible for designing the curriculum that education providers will deliver to learners in return for some kind of qualification. Consequently, they will have a great deal of knowledge and experience about what will work when thinking about curriculum design and what might need work to make it fit or adapt.

Approach:

The Research and Insight Team used the Joint Awarding Body Quality Group to convene a focus group of relevant AOs.

Training Providers who offer Level 3 courses

Purpose:

As the organisations responsible for delivering early years qualifications to learners, training providers are an important group who may have strong views on how the current qualifications work and how they might be improved.

Approach:

Our approach for this group was to send out the quantitative survey to training providers who deliver early years qualifications. From the survey we also looked to recruit participants to focus groups.

Department for Education and affiliated bodies

Purpose and approach:

It is important with a project such as this to also offer a voice to those closest to drafting and implementing the guidance. As such we reached out to all the named contacts provided by DfE and offered them the opportunity to voice their opinions through a workshop.

Appendix B1

Level 3 qualifications criteria and delivery – parents/carers survey

Audience: parents/carers with children using some form of childcare

Length of survey: target 10 mins, will test when scripted and discuss with DfE

Introduction to the survey

NCFE, on behalf of the Department for Education, is currently conducting a review of the qualification requirements for people wanting to working in early years settings.

The term early years settings may cover a range of environments from primary schools, children's centres, family hubs, maintained nursery schools, independent nursery schools, childminders, nannies and other private/voluntary providers of day care, as well as specialist settings such as Montessori, Regio Emilia, Forest Schools and Steiner.

In this survey we particularly want to hear from parents/carers. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes. We thank you in advance for your support.

Intro

1. How many children aged 0 - 5 years do you have?

- 0   **[Thank and close]**
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5+

GRID QUESTION

2. What type of Early Years provision are your children (aged 0-5 years) in? Please answer for each child up to a maximum of three children. If you have more than three please answer for the three eldest.

Child 1/Child 2/Child 3

Private nursery

Local Authority nursery

Childminder

Other

Don't use any external childcare

*If selected 'don't use any external childcare for all children - thank and close'

GRID QUESTION

3. How many hours a week do they spend in Early Years settings?

Child 1/Child 2/Child 3

0-8 hours

9-16 hours

17-24 hours

24-30 hours

30+ hours

3a. What part of the country do you live in?

- South East
- London
- North West
- East of England
- West Midlands
- South West
- Yorkshire and the Humber
- East Midlands
- North East
- Wales **[thank and close]**
- Scotland **[thank and close]**
- Northern Ireland **[thank and close]**
- Other **[thank and close]**

Qualification requirements

4. Do you know which qualifications an **Early Years Setting Manager** is required to have?

- Yes
- No

4a. *(If answered Yes to Q4)* What level of qualification do you think an Early Years Setting Manager is required to have?

- Level 1 (KS2 equivalent)
- Level 2 (GCSE/functional skills equivalent)
- Level 3 (A level equivalent)
- Level 4/5 (foundation degree equivalent)
- Level 6 (degree equivalent)
- Level 7 (post-graduate/PGCE equivalent)
- Don't know

4b. *(If answered No to Q4)* What level of qualification would you expect an Early Years Setting Manager to have?

- Level 1 (KS2 equivalent)
- Level 2 (GCSE/functional skills equivalent)
- Level 3 (A level equivalent)
- Level 4/5 (foundation degree equivalent)
- Level 6 (degree equivalent)
- Level 7 (post-graduate/PGCE equivalent)
- Don't know

5. Do you know which qualifications a **Nursery Assistant** is required to have?

- Yes
- No

5a. *(If answered Yes to Q5)* What level of qualification do you think a Nursery Assistant is required to have?

- Level 1 (KS2 equivalent)
- Level 2 (GCSE/functional skills equivalent)
- Level 3 (A level equivalent)
- Level 4/5 (foundation degree equivalent)
- Level 6 (degree equivalent)
- Level 7 (post-graduate/PGCE equivalent)
- Don't know

5b. *(If answered No to Q5)* What level of qualification would you expect a Nursery Assistant to have?

- Level 1 (KS2 equivalent)
- Level 2 (GCSE/functional skills equivalent)
- Level 3 (A level equivalent)
- Level 4/5 (foundation degree equivalent)

- Level 6 (degree equivalent)
- Level 7 (post-graduate/PGCE equivalent)
- Don't know

6. Do you know which qualifications an **Early Years Key Worker** is required to have? *An early years key worker is a named person who has responsibility in a setting for working with you and meeting your child's individual needs.*

- Yes
- No

[NOTE FOR DfE – WE KNOW THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE IN QUALS REQ BUT THOUGHT WE WOULD LOOK AT PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS]

6a. *(If answered Yes to Q6)* What level of qualification do you think an Early Years Key Worker is required to have?

- Level 1 (KS2 equivalent)
- Level 2 (GCSE/functional skills equivalent)
- Level 3 (A level equivalent)
- Level 4/5 (foundation degree equivalent)
- Level 6 (degree equivalent)
- Level 7 (post-graduate/PGCE equivalent)
- Don't know

6b. *(If answered No to Q6)* What level of qualification would you expect an Early Years Key Worker to have?

- Level 1 (KS2 equivalent)
- Level 2 (GCSE/functional skills equivalent)
- Level 3 (A level equivalent)
- Level 4/5 (foundation degree equivalent)
- Level 6 (degree equivalent)
- Level 7 (post-graduate/PGCE equivalent)
- Don't know

Childcare Costs

7a. What proportion of your current income do you currently pay out in childcare costs?

- Less than 10%
- 10%-20%
- 21%-30%

- 31%-40%
- 41%-50%
- More than 50%

7b. Would you be prepared to pay more in childcare costs if the practitioners in the setting were qualified to a higher level?

- Yes, I would be willing to pay more in fees
- No, I would not be willing to pay more than I already to
- No, I could not afford to pay more than I already do
- Don't know
- N/A (some parents may not pay fees if entitled to the free provision)

7c. If childcare costs increased which of the below options would be your most likely course of action? (Select up to three)

- I would consider reducing the number of hours my child was in a childcare setting
- I would consider taking my child out of childcare altogether
- I would consider reducing my hours at work to look after my child myself
- I would not change the hours my child attended a childcare setting
- I would work more hours to cover increasing costs
- Don't know

Parental Expectations

8a. What are your expectations of an Early Years setting? Select all that apply.

- To keep my child safe
- To promote my child's wellbeing (e.g., confidence, happiness, security)
- To enable me to go to work
- To enable me to have free time
- To help my child develop communication skills
- To help my child develop literacy skills
- To help my child develop numeracy skills
- To help my child develop social skills
- To help my child develop emotional intelligence skills
- To help my child develop healthy living skills
- To communicate with me consistently regarding my child's activities and progress
- Other – Please specify

8b. You selected the following options. Of these, which would you say are the three most important options?

SHOW OPTIONS SELECTED AT 8A

9a. What are your expectations of your child's Early Years Key Worker? Select all that apply.

- To be qualified to the required standard
- To be up to date with relevant regulation and legislation
- To be up to date with relevant training (e.g., first aid)
- To be up to date with current Early Years educational knowledge
- To develop a bond with my child
- To keep my child safe
- To prepare my child for school academically
- To prepare my child for school emotionally and socially
- To identify potential developmental issues or special educational needs
- Other – Please specify

9b. You selected the following options. Of these, which would you say are the three most important options?

SHOW OPTIONS SELECTED AT 9A

Curriculum

10. On a scale of 1-10, where 1 is Not at all confident and 10 is Very confident, how would you rate your understanding of the Early Years curriculum?

1 Not at all confident /2/3/4/5/6/7/8/9/10 Very confident

10a. (If given a score of below 5) – Please select a reason for your answer.

- I have never been given this information
- I am not interested in this information
- The information has been given to me but I do not understand it
- Other – Please specify

10b. (If given a score of above 5) – Please select a reason for your answer.

- I am interested in this information
- This info has been provided to me and I understand it
- I sourced this information myself

- Other – Please specify

11. If you were building a curriculum for your child, what would you want them to learn? Please rank these in order of importance to you with the most important at the top.

- Communication skills
- Literacy skills
- Numeracy skills
- Social skills
- Emotional intelligence skills
- Healthy living skills
- Readiness for school academically
- Equity, equality and diversity
- Growth as a well-rounded individual
- Learning respect for themselves and others.

12. How would you want your child to be taught?

- Play-based activities
- Structured learning activities
- A combination of play-based activities and structured learning activities
- Other – Please specify

Standards

13. Do you feel your Early Years setting is meeting your needs as a parent?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

13a. (If answered No to Q13) What are the reasons that your Early Years setting is not meeting your needs? Select all that apply.

- Communication
- Staff
- Management of the setting
- Availability of resources
- Other – Please specify

14. Do you feel your Early Years setting is meeting your child's needs?

- Yes
- No

- Don't know

14a. (If answered No to Q14) What are the reasons that your early years setting is not meeting your child's needs? Select all that apply.

- Academically
- Socially
- Developmentally
- Other – Please specify

Parent's/carers role

15a. Who do you think is most responsible for your child's social and emotional development during the ages of 0-5?

- Myself
- Family
- The Early Years setting
- Other – Please specify

15b. Who do you think is most responsible for your child's educational development during the ages 0-5?

- Myself
- Family
- The Early Years setting
- Other – Please specify

16. What do you think are your responsibilities in your child's Early Years education? Select all that apply.

- Developing basic skills (e.g. literacy, numeracy)
- Continuing learning activities at home
- Encouraging their interests
- Providing resources
- Other – Please specify

17. Do you feel you need more support in your child's Early Years education?

- Yes
- No

17a. (If answered Yes to Q17) Which areas do you feel you need more support with?

The Early Years qualification

18. Which areas would you expect to be covered in an Early Years qualification? Select all that apply.

- Support and promote children's early education and development
- Plan and provide effective care, teaching and learning that enables children to progress and prepares them for school
- Make accurate and productive use of assessment
- Develop effective and informed practice
- Safeguard and promote the health, safety and welfare of children
- Work in partnership with the key person, colleagues, parents and carers or other professionals
- Equity, equality, and diversity
- Theoretical approaches to attachment, development, and Early Years education
- Neurological and physical development
- How to recognise and work with children with SEND
- How to adapt curriculum to a child's interest and needs
- Other – please specify

19. Is there anything you think is missing from an Early Years qualification?

20. Has the Covid-19 pandemic caused you to change your views on early years education at all?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

20a. (If answered Yes to Q20) Please briefly discuss what has changed.

21. Do you have anything else you would like to add on the subject of early years education?

    OPEN TEXT BOX

22. Would you be interested in taking part in a focus group with other parents and carers to discuss some of these topics further? Please note an expression of interest at this stage does not commit you to anything.

- Yes

- No

22a. (If answered Yes to Q22) Thank you for your interest. Please leave your name and email address below and a member of the team will be in touch to discuss options.

1. Name:
2. Email address:

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey on early years education.

Appendix B2

Level 3 qualifications criteria and delivery – general audience

Audience: predominantly practitioners and training providers but could be shared more widely if necessary

Length of survey: target 10 mins, will test when scripted and discuss with DfE

Introduction to the survey

NCFE, on behalf of the Department for Education, is currently conducting a review of the Early Years Educator (EYE) qualification to improve quality, support practitioners, and address the impact of Covid-19 on the youngest children. In this survey we really want to hear your views on the current criteria for early years education at L3, what's currently working well and what could be improved, as well as few broader questions about your experience.

 In places the survey will refer to early years settings. This may cover a range from primary schools, children's centres, family hubs, maintained nursery schools, independent nursery schools, childminders, nannies and other private/voluntary providers of day care, as well as specialist settings such as Montessori, Regio Emilia, Forest Schools and Steiner.

The survey will take approximately 10 minutes. We thank you in advance for your support.

 Introduction

- Which of the following categories do you belong to?
    - Early years practitioner
    - Childminder
    2. Nursery owner or manager
    3. Training provider offering early years qualifications
    4. Other

- How long have you worked in the early years sector?
    3. Less than one year
    4. One – two years
    5. Three – five years
    6. Six – ten years
    7. More than ten years

4. What is your job title? (OPEN TEXT)
- What is your highest qualification?

- Level 1 (KS2 equivalent)
- Level 2 (GCSE/functional skills equivalent)
- Level 3 (A level equivalent)
- Level 4/5 (foundation degree equivalent)
- Level 6 (degree equivalent)
- Level 7 (post-graduate/PGCE equivalent)

4a. What part of the country do you work in?

- South East
- London
- North West
- East of England
- West Midlands
- South West
- Yorkshire and the Humber
- East Midlands
- North East
5. Wales **[thank and close]**
6. Scotland **[thank and close]**
7. Northern Ireland **[thank and close]**
8. Other **[thank and close]**

Criteria

- Do you think the Level 3 Early Years qualification is fit for purpose?
  6. Yes
  7. No
  8. Don't know

7. (If answered No to Q5) Why do you think this? (OPEN TEXT)

- If you were able, is there anything in the current Level 3 criteria you would remove? Please select all that apply.
  - Support and promote children's early education and development
  - Plan and provide effective care, teaching and learning that enables children to progress and prepares them for school
  - Make accurate and productive use of assessment
  - Develop effective and informed practice
  - Safeguard and promote the health, safety and welfare of children
  - Work in partnership with the key person, colleagues, parents and carers or other professionals
  8. Don't know
  9. I wouldn't remove anything

- Are there any additional areas you think should be included in a Level 3 Early Years qualification? Please select all that apply.
    - Equity, equality, and diversity
    9. Theoretical approaches to attachment, development, and Early Years education
    10. Neurological and physical development
    11. How to recognise and work with children with SEND
    12. How to adapt curriculum to a child's interest and needs
    13. Other – please specify

- How many placement hours do you think should be required for an individual to qualify as an Early Years Educator?
    - No hours required
    - 1-150
    - 151-250
    - 251-350
    - 351-450
    - 451-550
    - 551-650
    - 651-750
    10. 750+
    11. Don't know

- What do you believe is the primary purpose of the Early Years Level 3 qualification?
    - To prepare children for school academically
    11. To prepare children for school emotionally and socially
    12. To support children's academic development
    13. To support children's emotional and social development
    14. To identify potential developmental issues or special educational needs
    15. Other – Please specify

- Do you think there are there any skills gained through practice that are not taught, in the current qualification?
    12. Yes
    13. No
    14. Don't know

13. (If answered Yes to Q11) What skills learned through practice could be incorporated into the current qualification? (OPEN TEXT)

- Do you feel the current requirement for staff to have Maths and English Level 2 to be counted in the staff:child ratio is necessary?
  - Yes
  14. No
  15. Don't know

15. Please explain why you feel this way (OPEN TEXT)

- What do you think are the biggest challenges facing the sector currently? Please select all that apply. (Multi-choice)
  - Burnout/Workload
  - Stress
  - Poor pay
  - Workplace conditions
  - Lack of career progression options
  - COVID Recovery
  - Difficulty recruiting staff
  - Difficulty retaining staff
  - Government funding
  16. Other
  17. There are no challenges facing the sector

FOR PRACTIONERS / NURSERY MANAGERS ONLY

17. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is very dissatisfied and 10 is very satisfied, how satisfied are you with working in the early years sector?
   1/2/3/4/5/6/7/8/9/10

- Have you considered leaving the sector or profession in the last 12 months?
  - Yes
  18. No
  19. Don't know

- (If answered Yes to Q17) Why have you considered leaving?
  - Burnout/Workload
  19. Stress
  20. Poor pay
  21. Workplace conditions
  22. Lack of career progression options
  23. Other

- Do you have a clear idea of your career progression in the early years sector?
  20. Yes

21. No

- Would you be interested in taking part in a focus group with other parents and carers to discuss some of these topics further? Please note an expression of interest at this stage does not commit you to anything.
    21. Yes
    22. No

- (If answered Yes to Q20) Thank you for your interest. Please leave your name and email address below and a member of the team will be in touch to discuss options.
    - Name:
    - Email address:

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey on early years education.

Appendix B3

Qualitative discussion guide(s)

Introduction (3-5 mins)

Facilitator to:

Introduce the project and its objectives

To set out the purpose of the focus group and where it fits in within the wider project

Short-ice-breaker/getting to know you (5 mins, assuming a group of approx. 6 participants)

The Current Criteria

- What do you think is the main purpose of the current requirements? (3-5 mins)
- What do you like about the requirements? (5-6 mins)
- What don't you like about the requirements? (5-6 mins)
- Any changes you would make to the current criteria? (7-8 mins)

Delivery (5-6 mins)

- What do you think would be the optimal mode of delivery for a Level 3 qualification?

Wider contextual questions (7-8 mins)

- Does the current process provide sufficient preparation for dealing with SEND in early years settings?
- What are your thoughts on the Level 2 qual requirement?

Stakeholder specific questions (8-10 mins)

PRACTITIONERS ONLY

- Thinking about career progression, do you have a clear idea of your career path in the sector?

- Do you think you will stay in the sector?
- If you hold a level 2, will you work towards your level 3? If you hold a Level 3 qual, do you think you will work towards higher qualifications?
- What benefit do you see from having a Level 3 (or higher) qualification?

AOs ONLY

- Do you think there is anything about this qualification that affects its marketability?

ACADEMICS ONLY

1. Do you feel current policy is based on robust and current research?

Wrap-up and thanks (5 mins)

Draw out some of the key discussion points, thank the group and inform them of next steps including details of user testing. Will be receiving a post-participation feedback survey (very short, no more than a couple of minutes) shortly, will provide a reminder of the user testing options if people want to engage.

Appendix B4

Post-participation feedback survey

Email survey invitation text

Dear colleague,

We would welcome your feedback on the recent interview/focus group [DELETE AS APPROPRIATE] you participated in as part of the DfE's review into Level 3 Criteria for early years qualifications. The feedback will be shared anonymously with DfE and help to inform improvements when conducting stakeholder research in the future.

The survey will take around 2 minutes to complete. We would be grateful if you could complete it by 31 July. Please click <u>here</u> <u>to access</u>.

Many thanks in advance

Signed by researcher.

Questions

- Which of the following did you participate in?
    2. One-to-one interview
    3. A focus group

- How useful did you find the session as a mean of contributing to the review?
    3. Very useful
    4. Somewhat useful
    5. Not very useful
    6. Not at all useful

If answered 'Not very useful' or 'Not at all useful'

1. What would have helped improve your experience? (OPEN TEXT)

- This will take place during the week of 15-19 August NCFE will be carrying out some user testing of draft recommendations to go to DfE. Would you potentially be interested in taking part in the user testing? Please note expression of interest does not commit you to anything. Those who are interested will be contacted nearer the time. If you are interested please leave your name and email address.
    2. Name:
    3. Email address:

- Is there anything else you would like to add at this point? (OPEN TEXT)

Appendix B5

Invite for in-depth interviews

Dear [contact],

The Department for Education needs your help.

As a stakeholder in the early years sector, DfE wants to hear your thoughts about current Level 3 Early Years qualifications: what elements in the current criteria are effective, what could be improved, what elements you think are missing from the offer and what you think could make the qualification better for future generations of children. **Your views will really help direct how qualifications are shaped going forward.**

We are inviting you to take part in an interview to share with us your views. Interviews will take around 45 minutes, depending on the length of your answers. All answers you give will remain anonymous.

If you would like to take part, please contact us at EY@ncfe.org.uk and let us know your availability between xxxx June and xxxx July. One of the team will then get in touch to arrange a suitable slot.

We strongly encourage you to take part and contribute to future policy direction in the early years sector.

Your sincerely,

NAME   NAME

TITLE, NCFE   TITLE, Department for Education

Invite for focus groups

Dear [contact],

The Department for Education needs your help.

As a stakeholder in the early years sector, DfE wants to hear your thoughts about current Level 3 Early Years qualifications: what elements in the current criteria represent good quality, what elements you think are missing from the offer and what you think could make the qualification better for future generations of children. **Your views will really help direct how qualifications are shaped going forward.**

We are inviting you to take part in an online focus group with other individuals from your area of expertise [WE CAN TAILOR WORDING HERE DEP ON THE AUDIENCE E.G. 'other academics'] to share your views. Focus groups will last no more than one hour and will take place via Microsoft Teams. Discussions will be analysed as a group and all individual views expressed will remain anonymous.

We currently have the following groups scheduled:

Group 1

Date: xxx

Time: xxx

Group 2

Date: xxx

Time: xxx

Group 3

Date: xxx

Time: xxx

If you would like to take part please contact us at EY@ncfe.org.uk **and let us know which group you would like to attend.** One of the team will then get in touch to confirm your place and send you the Teams link. If none of these times are suitable but you are keen to take part, please let us know your availability and if more sessions are added we can keep you informed.

If you have any questions about the research, please contact EY@ncfe.org.uk, and someone from the research team at NCFE will be able to help.

We strongly encourage you to take part and contribute to future policy direction in the early years sector.

Your sincerely,

NAME   NAME

TITLE, NCFE   TITLE, Department for Education

Invite for surveys

Dear [contact],

The Department for Education needs your help.

As a stakeholder in the early years sector, DfE wants to hear your thoughts about current Level 3 Early Years qualifications: what elements in the current criteria represent good quality, what elements you think are missing from the offer and what you think could make the qualification better for future generations of children. **Your views will really help direct how qualifications are shaped going forward.** We are inviting you to take part in a short online survey to give us your views; it will take around 10 minutes and all information you give will remain completely anonymous.

Please use this link to complete the survey by xxx July2022.

Please feel free to share this link and encourage staff, colleagues and networks [to tailor where appropriate] to respond. If you have any questions about the research, please contact EY@ncfe.org.uk, and someone from the research team at NCFE will be able to help.

We strongly encourage you to take part and contribute to future policy direction in the early years sector.

Your sincerely,

NAME   NAME

TITLE, NCFE   TITLE, Department for Education

Appendix C: Criteria Comparison

Current criteria

1. **Support and promote children's early education and development**
    1.1. Understand the expected patterns of children's development from birth to 5 years, and have an understanding of further development from age 5 to 7. Children's development patterns to include:
        - Cognitive
        - speech, language and communication development
        - literacy and numeracy
        - physical
        - emotional
        - social
        - neurological and brain development
    1.2. Understand the significance of attachment and how to promote it effectively.
    1.3. Understand a range of underpinning theories and philosophical approaches to how children learn and develop, and their influence on practice.
    1.4. Analyse and explain how children's learning and development can be affected by their stage of development and individual circumstances.
    1.5. Understand the importance of promoting diversity, equality and inclusion, fully reflecting cultural differences and family circumstances.
    1.6. Understand the importance to children's holistic development of:
        - speech, language and communication
        - personal, social and emotional development
        - physical development
    1.7. Understand systematic synthetic phonics in the teaching of reading, and a range of strategies for developing early literacy and mathematics.
    1.8. Understand the potential effects of, and how to prepare and support children through, transitions and significant events in their lives. Transitions and significant events include:
        - moving to school
        - starting and moving through day care
        - birth of a sibling
        - moving home
        - living outside of the home
        - family breakdown
        - loss of significant people
        - moving between settings and carers
    1.9. Understand the current early education curriculum requirements.
    1.10. Promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice.

2. Plan and provide effective care, teaching and learning that enables children to progress and prepares them for school

2.1. Plan and lead activities, purposeful play opportunities and educational programmes which include the learning and development areas of current early education curriculum requirements. To include:
- communication and language (extending vocabulary, language structure, and dialogue, for example)
- physical development
- personal, social and emotional development
- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design

2.2. Ensure plans fully reflect the stage of development, individual needs and circumstances of children.

2.3. Provide learning experiences, environments and opportunities appropriate to the age, stage and needs of individual and groups of children.

2.4. Encourage children's participation, ensuring a balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities.

2.5. Engage in effective strategies to develop and extend children's learning and thinking, including sustained shared thinking.

2.6. Support and promote children's speech, language and communication development.

2.7. Support children's group learning and socialisation.

2.8. Model and promote positive behaviours expected of children.

2.9. Support children to manage their own behaviour in relation to others.

2.10. Understand when a child is in need of additional support.

2.11. Plan and provide activities to meet additional needs, working in partnership with parents and/or carers and other professionals, where appropriate.

3. Make accurate and productive use of assessment

3.1. Understand how to assess within the current early education curriculum framework using a range of assessment techniques.

3.2. Carry out and record observational assessment accurately.

3.3. Identify the needs, interests and stages of development of individual children.

3.4. Make use of formative and summative assessment, tracking children's progress to plan next steps and shape learning opportunities.

3.5. Discuss children's progress and plan the next stages in their learning with the key person, colleagues, parents and/or carers.

4. Develop effective and informed practice

4.1. Demonstrate a good command of the English language in spoken and written form.

4.2. Explain the importance of continued professional development to improve own skills and early years practice.

4.3. Engage in continuing professional development and reflective practice to improve own skills, practice, and subject knowledge (for example, in English, mathematics, music, history or modern foreign languages).

5. Safeguard and promote the health, safety and welfare of children

5.1. Know the legal requirements and guidance on health and safety, security, confidentiality of information, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

5.2. Identify and act upon own responsibilities in relation to health and safety, security, confidentiality of information, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

5.3. Plan and carry out physical care routines suitable to the age, stage and needs of the child.

5.4. Understand why health and well-being is important for babies and children and promote healthy lifestyles.

5.5. Understand how to respond to accidents and emergency situations.

5.6. Demonstrate skills and knowledge for the prevention and control of infection. Prevention and control of infection including:
- hand washing
- food hygiene
- dealing with spillages safely
- safe disposal of waste
- using correct personal protective equipment
- knowledge of common childhood illnesses and immunisation
- exclusion periods for infectious diseases

5.7. Carry out risk assessment and risk management in line with policies and procedures.

5.8. Understand safeguarding policies and procedures, including child protection, recognise when a child is in danger or at risk of abuse, and know how to act to protect them. Types of abuse including:
- domestic
- neglect
- physical
- emotional
- sexual abuse

5.9. Maintain accurate and coherent records and reports and share information, only when appropriate, to ensure the needs of all children are met. Records and reports include:
- medication requirements
- special dietary needs
- planning
- observation and assessment,

- health, safety and security
- accidents
- daily registers

6.   Work in partnership with the key person, colleagues, parents and/or carers or other professionals

6.1.   Work co-operatively with colleagues and other professionals to meet the needs of babies and children and enable them to progress.

6.2.   Work in partnership with parents and/or carers to help them recognise and value the significant contributions they make to the child's health, well-being, learning and development.

6.3.   Encourage parents and/or carers to take an active role in the child's play, learning and development.

Proposed criteria

1.   Safeguarding

1.1.   Identify and act upon own role and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and security, including child protection, reporting and confidentiality of information.

1.2.   Understand safeguarding policies and procedures, changes to legislation including child protection, recognise when a child is in danger or at risk of abuse, and know how to act to protect them.
   Types of abuse include neglect, physical, emotional, and sexual.

2.   Support and promote children's early education and development

2.1.   Understand the expected patterns of babies and children's development from ages:
   - 0-2
   - 2-3
   - 3-5
   - and an understanding of further development from 5 to 7.
   Children's development patterns to include:
   - cognitive
   - speech, language, and communication development
   - physical
   - emotional
   - neurological and brain development.

2.2.   Understand the significance of attachment and how to promote it effectively.

2.3. Understand a range of underpinning theories, philosophical approaches and research impacting early years pedagogy and how to apply these in practice.

2.4. Explain and analyse how baby's and children's learning and development can be affected by their stage of development and individual circumstances, such as moving school, birth of a sibling, family breakdown, and adoption and care, including the significance of adverse childhood experiences.

2.5. Analyse and explain how cultural differences and family circumstances can impact on baby's and children's learning and development.

2.6. Understand the importance to baby's and children's holistic development of:
- speech, language, and communication
- personal, social, and emotional development
- physical development.

2.7. Understand the development of emergent literacy and numeracy in children from birth to the age of seven years. Use strategies to support emerging literacy and numeracy.

2.8. Understand the potential effects of, and how to prepare and support babies and young children through, transitions and significant events in their lives. Transitions and significant events include:
- moving to school
- starting and moving through day care
- birth of a sibling
- moving home
- living outside of the home
- family breakdown
- loss of significant people
- moving between settings and carers.

2.9. Understand the current early education curriculum requirements as mandated through the Early Years Foundation Stage.

2.10. Promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice.

2.11. Understand when a child is in need of additional support.

3. Wellbeing

3.1. Understand the impact of health and wellbeing on baby's and children's development. Interact with children to positively impact their health and wellbeing.

3.2. Understand and use current dietary guidance for early years and explain why it is important for babies and young children to have a healthy balanced diet and be physically active.

3.3. Promote health and wellbeing in settings by implementing strategies to encourage babies and young children to:
- consume healthy and balanced meals, snacks, and drinks appropriate for their age

- be physically active through planned and spontaneous activity throughout the day, both indoors and outdoors.

3.4. Understand and demonstrate how and when to share information with parents/carers about the importance of healthy balanced diets, looking after teeth, and being physically active.

3.5. Explain, plan, and carry out respectful care routines appropriate to the development, stage, dignity and needs of the child, including:
- eating (feeding and weaning/complimentary feeding)
- nappy changing procedures
- potty/toilet training
- care of skin, teeth, and hair
- rest and sleep provision.

3.6. Understand the importance of, and promote the emotional wellbeing of, babies and children.

4. Communication

4.1. Understand and demonstrate how to communicate with all children in ways that will be understood, including verbal and non-verbal communication.

4.2. Understand and demonstrate how to extend all children's development and learning through verbal and non-verbal communication.

4.3. Understand and demonstrate ways to communicate with all children appropriate for all their stages of development, including those for whom English is an additional language (EAL) or who have delayed speech.

4.4. Be able to identify delays in communication development and describe appropriate support services for the baby or young child.

4.5. Support and promote baby's and children's speech, language, and communication development.

4.6. Demonstrate and implement a range of communication methods to exchange information with children and adults.

5. Health and safety

5.1. Know the legal requirements and guidance on health and safety, security, and confidentiality of information.

5.2. Identify and act upon own responsibilities in relation to health and safety, security, confidentiality of information, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

5.3. Carry out risk assessment and risk management in line with policies and procedures.

5.4. Understand how to respond to accidents and emergency situations:
- a baby or young child requiring urgent medical/dental attention
- a non-medical incident or emergency
- identifying risks and hazards.

5.5. Demonstrate skills and knowledge for the prevention and control of infection. Prevention and control of infection including:

- hand washing
- food hygiene
- dealing with spillages safely
- safe disposal of waste
- using correct personal protective equipment
- knowledge of common childhood illnesses and immunisation
- exclusion periods for infectious diseases.

5.6. Maintain accurate and coherent records and reports and share information, when appropriate, to ensure the needs of all children are met. Records and reports include:
- medication requirements
- special dietary needs
- planning
- observation and assessment
- health, safety, and security
- accidents and near misses
- daily registers.

5.7. Understand and explain the work setting's procedures for receiving, storing, recording, administering and the safe disposal of medicines.

5.8. Use equipment, furniture, and materials safely, following the manufacturer's instructions and setting's requirements. Assist others in the safe use of equipment, furniture, and materials.

5.9. Identify the signs and symptoms which may indicate that a child is injured, unwell (including common childhood illnesses and allergies) or in need of urgent medical/dental attention and take relevant action.

5.10. Understand and encourage children to:
- be aware of personal safety and the safety of others
- develop personal hygiene practices (including oral hygiene).

6. Support children with special educational needs and disabilities.

6.1. Understand and explain statutory guidance in relation to the care and education of children with special educational needs and disabilities.

6.2. Implement and analyse approaches to developing partnership working (including parents/carers) in relation to working effectively with children with special educational needs and disabilities.

6.3. Plan the assessment, planning, implementation, and reviewing (the graduated approach) of each baby's and young child's individual plan for their care and participation.

6.4. Promote and encourage a working environment that values and respects the developmental needs and stages of babies and children.

6.5. Understand and explain what internal and external specialist aids, resources, and equipment are available for the children in the setting and how to use these safely.

7. Plan and provide effective care, teaching, learning, and assessment that enables children to progress and prepares them for school

7.1. Plan and lead activities, purposeful play opportunities, and educational programmes which include the learning and development areas of current early education curriculum requirements. To include:
- communication and language (extending vocabulary, language structure, and dialogue, for example)
- physical development
- personal, social, and emotional development
- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design.

7.2. Know and demonstrate when, why, and how to carry out meaningful assessment.

7.3. Ensure plans fully reflect the stage of development, individual needs and circumstances of children, provide consistent care, and respond quickly to the needs and interests of the child.

7.4. Identify and plan learning experiences, environments, activities, and play opportunities (both indoors and outdoors), and educational programmes (both adult-led and child-initiated) to support children's holistic development through a range of play, creativity, social development, and learning, appropriate to the age, stage and needs of individual and groups of children.

7.5. Engage in effective strategies to develop and extend children's learning and thinking, including sustained shared thinking.

7.6. Support children's group learning and socialisation.

7.7. Support children to manage their own behaviour in relation to others through co-regulation.

7.8. Plan and implement activities relating to the statutory framework and curriculum, including the learning and development requirements for babies and young children that must be implemented by the setting.

7.9. Understand how to observe within the current early education curriculum framework using a range of techniques.

7.10. Carry out and record observational assessment accurately, plan and record the outcomes, and share results accurately and confidentially in line with expected statutory framework and setting's requirements.

7.11. Understand and embed inclusive practice ensuring that every child is included and supported by identifying the needs, interests, and stages of development of individual children.

7.12. Understand and analyse the key stages in the observation, formative and summative assessment, tracking children's progress and planning cycle, and understand the value of observation for:
- the child

- the parents/carers
- the early years setting in planning the next steps.

7.13. Discuss children's progress and plan the next stages in their learning with the key person, colleagues, parents and/or carers.

8. Work in partnership with the key person, colleagues, parents and/or carers or other professionals

8.1. Work co-operatively with colleagues, other professionals, and agencies to meet the needs of babies and young children and enable them to progress.

8.2. Work in partnership with parents and/or carers to help them recognise and value the significant contributions they make to the child's health, well-being, learning and development.

8.3. Encourage parents and/or carers to take an active role in the baby's/child's care, play, learning, and development.

8.4. Understand and explain the roles and responsibilities of other agencies and professionals that work with and support your setting, both statutory and non-statutory.

8.5. Understand the importance of being an advocate for the voice of the child, parental/carer engagement, the home learning environment, and their roles in early learning.

9. Own role, practice, and development

9.1. Demonstrate a good command of the English language in spoken and written form.

9.2. Understand and demonstrate the importance of reflective practice and continuous professional development to improve own skills and early years practice.

9.3. Engage in continuous professional development and reflective practice to improve own skills, practice, and subject knowledge.

9.4. Understand and explain own role, responsibilities and expected behaviours, and the roles of colleagues in the setting and team.

9.5. Understand and explain how to access (and update if necessary) workplace policies and procedures and your own responsibilities and accountabilities relating to these.

9.6. Understand and explain how your behaviour can impact on babies and children and influence them.

9.7. Understand and demonstrate own responsibilities when following procedures in the work setting for:
- reporting
- whistleblowing
- protecting and promoting the welfare of children
- safeguarding
- confidentiality
- information sharing

- use of technology
- referring development concerns
- protecting themselves, for example media and online presence.

9.8. Seek out feedback, mentoring, and/or supervision to identify and support areas for development, goals, and career opportunities.

9.9. Understand the importance of promoting diversity, equality, and inclusion, fully reflecting cultural differences and family circumstances