

About this publication

Who is it for? Early years development partnerships, NTOs, awarding bodies, TECs, LEAs, careers advisers, childcare co-ordinators in job centres and in FE colleges in England

What's it about? The national framework of accredited qualifications in early years education, childcare and playwork

What's it for? To provide details of accredited national qualifications

What next? Revised listings will be published as further qualifications are accredited

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Foreword

I am delighted to welcome the launch of the national framework of accredited qualifications for the early years education, childcare and playwork sector. Delivering the Government's strategies for childcare, early education and Sure Start depends on the skills and competence of the people who work with children. For the first time, there is now a framework which clearly explains to those people and their employers the skills and standards expected of them in different job roles, and the qualifications which recognise those levels of achievement. This is a key part of our strategy to improve the quality of services for children.

There are important benefits for people working with children too. This is challenging and rewarding work and the framework gives national recognition for the skills and competence you have. The framework provides, at last, a proper career structure, based on national occupational standards agreed by employers in the sector. You can be assured that QCA, with advice from the National Training Organisations for early years and for playwork, have checked these qualifications against rigorous standards, and know that they provide what you need to work with children. They have also simplified the many qualifications currently available, to make clearer the qualifications and training routes to take for your chosen career. You can also see how to add to your experience, training and qualifications, so it will be more straightforward to move into different types of work in the sector, or into other related sectors if that is what you want.

Work to complete the qualifications framework is still underway. The National Training Organisations are also developing the training framework: the new orientation programme will help you make the right career choices; their code of practice for training providers will help you choose the right training route for your needs; and their accreditation of prior learning and experience system will help you to work towards an NVQ or know where your current qualifications fit in. More information will come out as these initiatives are launched.

The early years education, childcare and playwork world has been at the forefront of these exciting developments. The qualifications and training framework is an important step in raising standards, and we must now work to make a reality of these career structures and recognition of the vital skills and work done by everyone in the sector.

Margaret Hodge, MBE, MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Employment and Equal Opportunities

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Introduction

This leaflet describes the first phase of QCA's work to establish a national framework of accredited qualifications and covers the early years education, childcare and playwork sector. Updates will be published over the coming months as further areas of the framework are completed. This is part of QCA's wider task to review all externally awarded qualifications and establish a coherent, national framework covering all employment sectors.

The early years education, childcare and playwork sector has been at the forefront of this work, testing the ground for all sectors. As you will see from the list of recently accredited qualifications in appendix 1, awarding bodies have already rationalised their provision considerably so that fewer qualifications now cover the main job roles in this area. In one case, a single qualification has replaced 13 previous awards. The accredited qualifications listed have met testing national standards in order to be included in the framework. They will also now be subject to national monitoring by the regulatory authorities to ensure that they continue to maintain those standards. The process of regular review and monitoring will help to ensure that the qualifications continue to cover the skills and competences that people need to work with children.

The framework will quickly lead to changes in the qualification courses on offer. It does not mean, however, that older qualifications will immediately lose their value, nor that people just starting a course will not get a useful qualification at the end. There will be a transition period as existing courses finish and new ones are put in place. If you have questions about what this means for you or your organisation, particularly if you are currently following or offering a qualification programme, you should contact the relevant National Training Organisation (NTO), where you will be able to seek advice about the equivalence of existing and accredited qualifications. The relevant contact details are given at the end of this leaflet.

The accreditation of qualifications is a continuing process. QCA and its partner regulatory bodies for Wales and Northern Ireland are still considering a number of qualifications for accreditation in areas related to early years education, childcare and playwork. At the same time, the NTOs are developing the training framework to support qualifications, including training routes to achieve them, developing national occupational standards at NVQ level 4 for early years, and making sure the whole framework continues to meet the needs of the sector. QCA will issue updates as more qualifications are approved and intends to publish the full framework in spring 2000.

The framework will help training providers plan the qualifications and training they will offer; help individuals decide what courses to follow for their chosen career; and help employers and regulators consider what qualifications are appropriate for different job roles. This is the first step towards raising standards, establishing a career structure and gaining recognition for the important work undertaken by people who work with children.



Dr Nick Tate
Chief Executive, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

Why a new framework is needed

In the past there has been a confusing array of vocational qualifications and training courses for those working in early years education, childcare and playwork. Awarding bodies tended to use different conventions to describe their qualifications, making it difficult to tell who they were aimed at, or at what level they were pitched. Some qualifications had been developed on a local basis; others were available nationally. There were no common benchmarks for comparing qualifications and training programmes and this made it difficult for those who wanted to move around the system or progress in their careers. Employers understandably relied on what they knew personally when defining their requirements, which led to different requirements being quoted in various parts of the country. As few qualifications or training courses had been developed to meet a national standard, it was difficult to judge whether they were credible, or whether they met the quality levels required for such a sensitive area as working with children.

The quality of training and the standard of qualifications for those who work with children is vital. Its importance has grown with the expansion of early education and childcare policies. A framework will ensure that training and assessment is undertaken to national standards, and will also help employers to judge the relevance of an individual's qualifications. It will help to integrate care and education for the early years in line with government policy by setting national occupational standards; it will provide clearer career progression routes for those working in the sector.

What the framework will do

Qualifications

The regulatory authorities – the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) for England and the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC) – were asked by the Department for Education and Employment and the then Welsh Office¹, to work with the relevant National Training Organisations to establish a framework of qualifications and training for the sector. This is part of the regulatory authorities' wider task of defining criteria for the accreditation of all externally awarded qualifications. There will be a more rational and coherent range of provision, quality assured to national standards.

QCA, working together with partner regulatory bodies in Wales (ACCAC) and Northern Ireland (CCEA), have developed new criteria for the accreditation of all externally awarded qualifications. Qualifications for early years education, childcare and playwork are the first of many thousands of qualifications to be considered².

¹ Replaced on 1 July 1999 by the National Assembly for Wales.

² The framework initially covers England and Wales. It is anticipated that the results of work undertaken in Northern Ireland will be published during spring 2000.

The new framework for early years education, childcare and playwork will:

- establish which qualifications are appropriate for different occupational areas and job roles;
- make clear the purpose of each qualification, and the standard to be reached to achieve it;
- provide more transparent progression routes – upwards to higher levels, and sideways to related areas;
- help employers distinguish between those qualifications that demonstrate that the holder is fully occupationally competent and has been assessed in the workplace, and those that certificate achievement at the end of a course and prepare people for work.

Every vocationally-related qualification in the framework will be benchmarked against national occupational standards. These standards are set by the relevant national training organisations in consultation with all the key employment interests in the sector. They are regularly reviewed to ensure that they continue to represent best practice and meet employment needs. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are designed to cover all the occupational standards for a particular job role, so that someone with the relevant NVQ will have demonstrated competence in all critical areas. All other accredited vocationally-related qualifications will have a clear relationship to the relevant national occupational standards, so it should be easier for an individual – working with an approved NVQ assessor – to see what else they need to do if they want to progress towards a full NVQ.

Tighter controls on the standards and quality of assessment for accredited qualifications means that all vocationally-related awards will involve external assessment. Awarding bodies will have to follow a rigorous code of practice and be subject to regular quality monitoring by the regulatory authorities.

Training

In parallel with these developments for qualifications, the Early Years National Training Organisation and the National Training Organisation for Sport, Recreation and Allied Occupations (covering playwork) have been working together to develop the training framework.

NTOs have already developed training routes which lead to NVQs, such as the Modern Apprenticeship and National Traineeship programmes. They are developing an orientation programme to help new entrants to the sector make better choices about the career and training routes open to them.

The playwork sector has set up a training endorsement system which will endorse training routes and products which underpin the national occupational standards and qualifications. The NTO for playwork can provide more information on this.

Both NTOs are also developing a code of practice for training providers in the sector. A wide variety of training courses and programmes is on offer, not all of which necessarily lead to formal qualifications. This code will help trainers align their provision to national standards.

The inspectorates – Ofsted, the Training Standards Council, the Further Education Funding Council Inspectorate and, shortly, the new inspectorate proposed for post-16 provision – also have an important role to play in monitoring the quality of all vocationally-related training programmes.

The Early Years NTO is developing guidance on the accreditation of prior learning and experience to guide individuals who want to re-enter the workforce, or who may have achieved their qualifications some time ago and need to update their skills. This guidance will help to show how they can measure their earlier achievements against the requirements of qualifications in the new framework and, where appropriate, claim credit towards an accredited qualification. The NTOs can also provide advice about old qualifications.

What will the national qualifications framework look like?

The framework groups qualifications together according to their level and their category. Qualifications are classified as either: ‘general’, such as GCSEs and A levels; ‘vocationally-related’, such as GNVQs and other vocational qualifications; or ‘occupational’, such as NVQs, and professional qualifications which attest to occupational competence. There are six levels in the framework, with ‘entry level’ being the first level of achievement and level 5 being the highest. Vocationally-related and occupational qualifications in the framework will be unit based and, as the framework develops, there will be more opportunities for individuals to take a mix of units to suit their needs.

The intention is that the framework for early years education, childcare and playwork will include seven occupational groups: early years education and childcare; playwork; working with families; in school/out of school learning and support; sport and recreation; working with youth; health and related occupations. At the moment only early years education, childcare and playwork qualifications have been considered. Qualifications for the other groups will soon be considered and should start to appear in the framework in later updates.

National occupational standards are under development for youthwork and teaching assistants, and for early years care and education at level 4. NVQs and other vocationally-related qualifications in these areas are therefore not yet included on the list. Standards for youthworkers and teaching assistants are expected during 2000. Level 4 standards for early years will be considered during the autumn of 1999, with new level 4 NVQs emerging shortly thereafter. Level 4 standards for playwork are also under review, and it is anticipated that the existing level 4 NVQ in Playwork Development will be revised and integrated with the new level 4 NVQs for early years. Alongside this work, improved progression routes into teaching are also being explored.

Vocationally-related qualifications at levels 4 and 5 have not yet been called for accreditation. The design principles for these higher levels are under development and criteria for accreditation are expected to be available from April 2000.

The national qualifications framework

<i>General qualifications</i>	<i>Vocationally-related qualifications</i>	<i>Occupational qualifications</i>
		NVQ level 5
		NVQ level 4
Advanced level (eg GCE A and AS level)	Advanced/level 3 (eg GNVQ Advanced and other level 3 vocationally-related qualifications)	NVQ level 3
Intermediate level (eg GCSE grades C-A*)	Intermediate/level 2 (eg GNVQ Intermediate level and other level 2 vocationally-related qualifications)	NVQ level 2
Foundation level (eg GCSE grades G-D and other general qualifications)	Foundation/level 1 (eg GNVQ Foundation and other level 1 vocationally-related qualifications)	NVQ level 1
Entry Level Awards		

Qualifications for those working in early years education, childcare and playwork fall within both the vocationally-related and occupational categories. NVQs are already well established in Early Years Care and Education and in Playwork and are suitable for those who can provide evidence of their competence in the workplace. The level 2 qualifications are designed for those working under supervision, whereas the level 3 NVQs cover the competence required of those working without supervision, for example as playgroup or pre-school leaders. When the new level 4 NVQs are available, these will provide a route for those working at a senior management level or as specialist, advanced practitioners in early years and playwork settings.

Within the vocationally-related category, there are a range of qualifications designed for people preparing to work with children, or who want to extend their knowledge before progressing to work at a higher occupational level. Some qualifications cover the essential underpinning knowledge and skills needed for particular job roles, such as childminding. Others cover a broad range of vocational skills and knowledge and provide a wider range of progression routes.

Vocationally-related qualifications are suitable for those in full and part-time education and training. They are also appropriate for people who are working but who are unable to achieve a full NVQ, perhaps because their current job does not cover a wide enough range of responsibilities.

They could, however, be assessed for the level 2 NVQ, and develop their knowledge and skills by working towards a vocationally-related qualification at level 3 in readiness for future promotion. Similarly, those who have already achieved a level 3 NVQ in one

area may wish to take a level 3 vocationally-related award in a different area in order to develop and extend their specialist knowledge. This will help them prepare for more senior roles at work, or before starting to work towards a level 4 NVQ.

Qualifications accredited to date

The first qualifications accredited to the framework so far are shown in appendix 1. Qualifications are grouped according to occupational area and job roles within the early years and playwork sectors. As further qualifications are accredited, an updated list will be produced and details will also be provided on QCA's website, at www.qca.org.uk/

Awarding bodies have been revising their qualifications to bring them into line with national occupational standards. As a consequence, there has been some rationalisation of overlapping provision and a reduction in the number of different qualification titles. Some small awards have been combined with others to form larger, unit based qualifications, so that candidates can take individual units, or a particular combination of units to achieve a full award.

Appendix 2 lists other qualifications which have been submitted for accreditation and are still under consideration.

Appendix 3 lists the qualifications in early years education, childcare and playwork which are approved for funding purposes under DfEE's Schedule 2(a) list for use in colleges until July 2000. The list gives the current name of the qualification(s) as well as the new name, where awarding bodies have revised their qualifications.

DfEE will be publishing a revised list of Schedule 2(a) qualifications at the end of 1999 for use in colleges up to July 2001. The full Schedule 2(a) list can be viewed on DfEE's website, at www.dfee.gov.uk/schedule2a. After July 2001, it is expected that only qualifications that have been accredited by the regulatory authorities will be approved for funding for use in colleges.

For further details on any of the qualifications listed, please contact the awarding body concerned. For information about the national occupational standards on which these qualifications are based, contact the NTO concerned. Contact details are given on pages 12 and 13 of this leaflet.

Appendix 1

National qualifications accredited to date by the regulatory authorities

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE		
<p>Nursery assistant Pre-school assistant Crèche assistant Parent/toddler group assistant; Playgroup assistant Toy library worker Homestart worker Mother's help Baby sitter/Au pair</p>	<p>CACHE Level 2 Certificate in Child Care and Education</p> <p>C&G Level 2 Progression Award in Early Years Care and Education</p>	<p>NVQ level 2 in Early Years Care and Education <i>(This NVQ is awarded by C&G, CACHE EdExcel and the Open University)</i></p>
<p>Nursery supervisor Pre-school leader Crèche leader Playgroup leader Special educational needs supporter Nursery nurse Nanny Childminder</p>	<p>CACHE Level 3 Diploma in Child Care and Education <i>(previously known as the NNEB Diploma in Nursery Nursing)</i></p> <p>Level 3 Certificate in Childminding Practice <i>(run in association with the National Childminding Association)</i></p> <p>Level 3 Certificate of Professional Development in Work with Children and Young People</p>	<p>NVQ level 3 in Early Years Care and Education <i>(This NVQ is awarded by C&G, CACHE EdExcel and the Open University)</i></p>
PLAYWORK		
<p>Assistant playworker Playworker Holiday playscheme worker Adventure playworker</p>	<p>C&G Level 2 Progression Award in Playwork</p>	<p>NVQ level 2 in Playwork <i>(This NVQ is awarded by C&G, CACHE EdExcel and OCR.)</i></p>
<p>Senior playworker/ co-ordinator</p>		<p>NVQ level 3 in Playwork <i>(This NVQ is awarded by C&G, CACHE EdExcel and OCR.)</i></p>
<p>Playwork manager Playwork development officer</p>		<p>NVQ level 4 in Playwork <i>(This NVQ is awarded by C&G, CACHE and OCR.)</i> <i>It is currently under review and likely to be integrated with the new NVQ being developed at level 4 for early years.)</i></p>

Appendix 2

Qualifications under consideration for accreditation by the regulatory authorities for early years education, childcare and playwork

Awarding Body Consortium (ABC)

Introductory Certificate: Playwork with Children Over Five

Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE)

Foundation Award in Caring for Children (level 1)
Mudiad Ysgolion Meifhrin Diploma in Child Care and Education

EdExcel (BTEC)

Intermediate Diploma in Early Years (level 2)
Intermediate Diploma in Early Years Care (level 2)
National Certificate in Early Years (level 3)
Advanced Certificate in Overseas Resort Operations (level 3), National Diploma in Early Years (level 3)

National Association for Maternal and Child Welfare

Certificate of Achievement in Early Years Care and Education
Certificate in Practical Infant and Child Care Skills (foundation level)

NcFE

Certificate in Early Years Practice (level 2); Advanced Certificate in Early Years Practice (level 3);
Certificate in Early Years Curriculum Development; Certificate in Midday Supervision;
Certificate in Playwork (level 2); Certificate in Working with Children and Young People (level 2)

National Centre for Playwork Education

Take 10 for Play (level 2)

National Open College Network (NOCN)

Advanced Award in Working with Children (level 3)
Advanced Certificate in Childcare and Playwork (level 3)
Intermediate Award in Working with Children (level 2)
Intermediate Certificate in Childcare and Playwork (level 2)
Intermediate Progression Award for Early Years Education, Childcare and Playwork (level 2)

Pre-school Learning Alliance

Diploma in Pre-School Practice (level 3)
Pre-School Assistants Award (level 2)

Wales Pre-school Playgroups Association

Diploma in Playgroup Practice

Appendix 3

Early years education, childcare and playwork qualifications on Schedule 2(a) and approved for funding for use in colleges until 31 July 2000 (as at 18 August 1999)

Awarding Body Consortium (ABC)

Playwork with Children Over 5

City & Guilds

Progression Award in Playwork Level 2 (*now accredited*)
Progression Award in Early Years Care and Education Level 2 (*now accredited*)
Playworker Certificate

Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE)

Certificate in Child Care and Education (*now accredited as the level 2 Certificate in Child Care and Education.*)

CACHE Diploma in Nursery Nursing (NNEB) (*now accredited and retitled as the level 3 Diploma in Child Care and Education.*)

Advanced Diploma in Child Care and Education

Caring for Young Children

Developing Childminding Practice (Family Day Care) Stage 1 (NCMA)
Developing Childminding Practice (Family Day Care) Stage 2 (NCMA)
(*The above stage 1 and 2 qualifications have been combined and have now been accredited as the level 3 Certificate in Childminding Practice.*)

Management in Early Years

Protecting Children

Registration and Inspection Under the Children's Act 1989

Supporting Children and their Families in Toy Libraries

Supporting Children and Families in the Community

The Advanced Baby Practitioner

Working with Children and Young People with Special Needs

(*These awards have been accredited as units within the level 3 Certificate of Professional Development in Work with Children and Young People.*)

EdExcel (BTEC)

National Certificate in Childhood Studies (Nursery Nursing)

National Diploma in Childhood Studies (Nursery Nursing)

Advanced Award: Overseas Resort Operations (Children's Couriers)

Intermediate Diploma in Early Years

National Association for Maternal and Child Welfare

Advanced Certificate in Child Care and Education

Certificate in Nursery Management Skills

Certificate in Human Development, Child Care and Family Life (Stages 1–3)

Certificate in Practical Infant and Child Care Skills

Diploma in Nursery Nursing

Appendix 3 (Continued)

Early years education, childcare and playwork qualifications on Schedule 2(a) and approved for funding for use in colleges until 31 July 2000 (as at 18 August 1999)

NcFE

Certificate in Crèche Management
Certificate in Early Years Curriculum Development
Certificate in Delivering Care in the Home
Certificate in Playcare Work; Certificate in Midday Supervision;
Certificate in Playgroup Practice
Advanced Certificate in Playgroup Practice
Certificate in Sessional Crèche Work
Certificate in Supporting Children's Education

National Centre for Playwork Education

Take Ten for Play Certificate

National Open College Network (NOCN)

Childcare and Education: Intermediate
Childcare and Education: Advanced
Playwork: Intermediate
Playwork: Advanced
Working with Children: Intermediate
Working with Children: Advanced

Open College of the North West (OCNW)

Foundation Certificate: Childcare Work

Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations Board (OCR)

Certificate in Education and Care of the Under Fives

Pre-school Learning Alliance

Care and Education Under 2 Certificate
Child Development Certificate
Curriculum Planning Certificate
Experienced Playleaders Certificate
Introduction to Pre-school Practice
Certificate in Pre-school Practice
Special Needs Certificate
Diploma in Pre-school Practice

CONTACT DETAILS

Regulatory authorities

ACCAC

(Awdurdod Cymwysterau, Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru/the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales)

Castle Buildings

Womanby Street

Cardiff

CF1 9SX

Tel: 029 2037 5400 e-mail: info@accac.org.uk

CCEA

(Council for Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment)

Clarendon Docks

29 Clarendon Road

Belfast

BT1 3BG

Tel: 028 2026 1200 e-mail: info@ccea.org.uk

QCA

(Qualifications and Curriculum Authority)

29 Bolton Street

London

W1Y 7PD

Tel: 020 7509 5555 e-mail: info@qca.org.uk

National Training Organisations (NTOs)

Early Years NTO

Pilgrim's Lodge

Holywell Hill

St Albans

Hertfordshire

AL1 1ER

Tel: 01727 738 300 e-mail: early-years-nto.org.uk

NTO for Sport and Recreation and Allied Occupations

Playwork Unit

24 Stephenson Way

London

NW1 2HD

Tel: 020 7388 7755 e-mail: the.nto@sprito.org.uk

Government department

DfEE Childcare Unit

Level 2

Caxton House

6-12 Tothill Street

London

SW1H 9NA

Tel: 020 7273 5684 e-mail: childcare.unit@dfee.gov.uk

CONTACT DETAILS (Continued)

Awarding bodies

City and Guilds

1 Giltspur Street

London

ECA 9DD

Tel: 020 7294 8007 e-mail: affinity@city-and-guilds.co.uk

For queries on care awards, contact City and Guilds Affinity at the above address.

Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE)

8 Chequer Street

St Albans

Herts

AL1 3XZ

Tel: 01727 847 636 e-mail: info@cache.org.uk

EdExcel

Stewart House

32 Russell Square

London

Tel: 020 7393 4444 e-mail: enquires@edexcel.org.uk

OCR

Prospect House

Westwood Way

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Coventry

CV4 8JQ

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344 -354 Gray's Inn Road

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