

# THE UNITED KINGDOM

of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Early Childhood Education and Care

## ECEC Workforce Profile

*Country report author*

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# Contents

<b>1. ECEC governance in the United Kingdom.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2. Who belongs to the early years workforce? .....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision.....	11
2.1.1 England: Regular contact staff in the PVI sector .....	11
2.1.2 Wales: Regular contact staff in the PVI Sector .....	14
2.1.3 Scotland: Regular contact staff in the PVI Sector .....	16
2.1.4 Northern Ireland: Regular contact staff in the PVI Sector .....	19
2.1.5 England, Wales, Northern Ireland: Regular contact staff in the maintained sector (schools) .....	19
2.1.6 Scotland: Regular contact staff in the maintained sector (schools) .....	22
2.2 Centre leader.....	23
2.3 Centre-based posts of responsibility.....	24
2.4 Co-ordinating and supervisory staff.....	24
2.5 Specialist support staff .....	24
<b>3. Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity .....</b>	<b>25</b>
3.1 England: Structural composition of ECEC workforce .....	25
3.2 Wales: Structural composition of ECEC workforce .....	26
3.3 Scotland: Structural composition of ECEC workforce .....	26
3.4 Northern Ireland: Structural composition of ECEC workforce .....	27
<b>4. Initial professional education (IPE).....</b>	<b>27</b>
4.1 Initial qualifying routes – Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).....	27
4.1.1 England, Wales and Northern Ireland: QTS qualifying routes .....	27
4.1.2 Scotland: QTS qualifying routes .....	28
4.2 Initial qualifying routes (non-QTS) .....	29
4.2.1 England.....	29
4.2.2 Wales: Initial ECEC qualifying routes (non-QTS) .....	31
4.2.3 Scotland: Initial ECEC qualifying routes (non-QTS) .....	33
4.2.4 Northern Ireland: Initial ECEC qualifying routes (non-QTS).....	34
4.3 Competences, curricula and pedagogic-didactic approaches in IPE programmes .....	36
4.3.1 UK wide: Competence specifications and curricula.....	36
4.3.2 England: Competence specifications for teachers with QTS .....	38
4.3.4 Wales: Competence specifications for teachers with QTS .....	39
3.3.4 Scotland: Competence specifications for teachers with QTS .....	40
4.3.5 Northern Ireland: Competence specifications for teachers with QTS.....	42
4.4 ECEC competence specifications and IPE curricula (PVI sector) .....	43
4.4.1 England.....	43



4.4.2	Wales: Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development: Level 5 and Level 3 competence specifications.....	44
4.4.3	Scotland: Competence specifications – Early Learning and Childcare.....	47
4.4.4	Northern Ireland .....	48
4.5	Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability .....	49
	UK-wide.....	49
4.5.1	Formal opportunities for moving up and across qualifications frameworks..	50
4.5.2	Options for career changers .....	50
<b>5.</b>	<b>Guided workplace experience (practicum) in the initial professional education of core professionals.....</b>	<b>51</b>
5.1	Regulation/guidance, duration and structure of work-based learning in IPE.....	51
5.2	ECTS credits allocation for IPE.....	51
5.3	Skills and competences developed in IPE through work-based learning.....	51
5.4	Forms of student self-evaluation and external evaluation .....	52
5.5	Qualifying courses for mentors/supervisors .....	53
5.6	Designated roles, time allocations and remuneration of mentors/supervisors .....	53
<b>6.</b>	<b>Continuing professional development (CPD) for ECEC staff.....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Working conditions and current workforce issues .....</b>	<b>61</b>
7.1	Remuneration.....	61
7.2	Full-time and part-time employment in ECEC provision.....	62
7.3	Support measures in the workplace for newly qualified and newly appointed staff .	62
7.4	Non-contact time .....	63
7.5	Current staffing issues.....	63
<b>8.</b>	<b>Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to staffing and professionalisation issues.....</b>	<b>64</b>
8.1	England: Recent policy reforms.....	64
8.2	Wales: Recent policy reforms.....	65
8.3	Scotland: Recent policy reforms.....	65
8.4	Northern Ireland: Recent policy reforms .....	66
<b>9.</b>	<b>Recent country-specific research focusing on ECEC staff .....</b>	<b>66</b>
9.1	Research in England .....	66
9.2	Research in Wales .....	67
9.3	Research in Scotland .....	68
9.4	Research in Northern Ireland .....	70
<b>10.</b>	<b>Workforce challenges – country expert assessment .....</b>	<b>71</b>
	<b>References .....</b>	<b>74</b>
	Appendix I: Acronyms and definitions .....	79
	Appendix II: Explanatory note on UK qualification levels .....	81



## Glossary

### **EQF** – *European Qualifications Framework*

Outcomes based (knowledge, skills, competences), eight-level reference tool to enable qualification comparisons between countries.

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/european-qualifications-framework-eqf>

### **ECTS** – *European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System*

A system for enhancing student mobility through the Europe-wide recognition of credit transfers and credit accumulation in higher education

[https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system-ects\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system-ects_en)

### **ISCED** – *International Standard Classification of Education*

An instrument for comparing levels and fields of education across countries, developed by UNESCO in the 1970s and revised in 1997 and 2011.

<http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/international-standard-classification-of-education-isced-2011-en.pdf>

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## Preamble

The UK, comprising England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, has a mixed economy in ECEC with most provision for 0 to 5 year-olds traditionally provided by the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector and an early start to compulsory schooling at 5 years (4 in Northern Ireland). More recently there has been an increase in state-funded provision for 3 to 5 year-olds (and latterly for disadvantaged 2 year-olds) in nursery and reception classes in primary schools, with almost all schools now adopting a 4+ admissions policy (in the September after the 4<sup>th</sup> birthday).

Politically, the UK has been undergoing a period of gradual change over the last 35 years with increasing devolution of responsibilities to its four constituent nations. Governance of ECEC services is amongst the devolved responsibilities. This has resulted in increasing divergence between education and social services policies and systems, including provision and regulation of services for young children and their families and associated workforce policies. This divergence has become more evident between Wales and Scotland and the rest of the UK over the last five years.

While the picture of the ECEC workforce across the UK is confused and confusing there remain some common overarching features across the four nations:

- A mixed economy of care; reflecting in part the UK’s modified neo-liberal political and economic position in championing business/private enterprise and supporting social enterprise and voluntary organisations with state intervention for essential public services
- Higher status accorded to education than to care; based partly on historical associations between caring/mothering as ‘women’s work’ for which no qualifications were necessary
- Teachers with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) enjoying significantly better pay, career structures, conditions of service and CPD entitlements than other workers due to the different status of education and care and strong unionisation of the teaching workforce combined with differential patterns of employment across the public/local authority and PVI sectors
- Absence of unionisation amongst the non-teaching workforce; poorly paid and poorly qualified women working in relative isolation in small private and voluntary settings are less likely to join unions
- Absence of men, particularly in work with the youngest children
- A predominantly white female workforce
- National specification – whether statutory or through guidance – of minimum standards and curriculum, partly as a means of standardising provision across what is because of the mixed economy approach a highly variable sector
- Regulation and enforcement regimes through inspectorates that act as mechanisms of control, standardisation and accountability and provide information to justify public expenditure
- Competence-based qualification requirements based on national standards and curriculum frameworks
- Despite stated aspirations towards graduate leadership, and progress in developing higher level qualifications, the minimum requirements for leadership of the majority of non-school ECEC settings remain at level 4 EQF/level 3 ISCED in England. In Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland these have been raised to level 6 EQF/level 5 ISCED.

This report describes in detail the provision and governance of ECEC, workforce structures, qualification and competence requirements separately for each of the four nations. However, where features are largely shared and to avoid repetition, some sections have been integrated.

# 1. ECEC governance in the United Kingdom

## 1.1 England: ECEC governance

With a population of 56.5 million (ONS 2022), England is by far the largest of the four nations. Since 2010 there has been a shift in ECEC policy from an integrated policy framework to one focused on educational outcomes. The Department for Education (DfE) has overall responsibility for ECEC and compulsory schooling and Local Authorities in England have specific statutory responsibilities under the Childcare Act 2006 (Legislation.gov.uk 2006) and the Childcare Act 2016 (Legislation.gov.uk 2016a). These include securing sufficient childcare places in their area, providing information to parents, providing information and training to childcare providers and ensuring provision of free childcare entitlement (15 hours for vulnerable 2 year-olds; 15 hours for 3 and 4 year-olds and 30 hours for 3 and 4 year-olds of working parents).

The *Early Years Foundation Stage* (EYFS) (DfE 2023b) sets out the statutory curriculum framework and safeguarding and welfare requirements for provision from 0 up to 5 years and regardless of setting. *Development Matters* (DfE 2021a) is non-statutory curriculum guidance that sits alongside the EYFS.

In England, regulation and inspection of all services for children and young people, including early years, out-of-school and residential childcare as well as schools, is integrated under the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). Ofsted is a non-ministerial government department that reports directly to parliament via the Select Committee on Education. This gives it some degree of independence from ministerial/political oversight by the Department for Education. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is legally required to provide an annual report on standards in schools and, since 2001, to report separately on standards and issues in early years services. Ofsted registers providers of early years education and childcare (other than schools) on either the Early Years Register (compulsory for provision that includes under-fives) or the Childcare Register (compulsory for provision for children from 5 to 8 years and optional for older age groups or activity clubs). Provision registered on the Early Years Register will be inspected within 30 months of registration and at least once within the next 6 years. Any setting that is judged as 'inadequate' will be inspected again within 6 months and those judged as 'requiring improvement' within a year. Ofsted will prioritise inspections where concerns have been expressed (Ofsted 2021).

Ofsted provides feedback on strengths and areas for development in relation to the inspection framework and explains areas for improvement. Local Authority early years advisory teams provide support to settings to develop their practice, though the extent of support varies across England. Many teams have been reduced as a result of funding cuts and the academisation<sup>1</sup> of schools. This has given schools more autonomy, downgraded the role of local authorities and led to a greater emphasis on mutual support between schools and early years settings through Teaching Schools and system leadership roles (networks of national, local and specialist lead teachers recognised for specific expertise).

Standards, qualifications and registration for teachers – those with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) – are under the direct control of the Department for Education. There is no register for Early Years Practitioners who are qualified at Level 3 on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) – equivalent to Level 4 EQF.

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<sup>1</sup> Academisation is the process by which England is moving toward all schools becoming an Academy. These are independent but state-funded. They vary in size and the policy direction is for all Academies to be part of multi-academy trusts.

## 1.2 Wales: ECEC governance

Wales has a population of circa 3.1 million (ONS 2021). The National Assembly for Wales (commonly known as the Welsh Assembly) was established in 1999 and has legislative and administrative powers covering all forms of health, education and social services for young children and their families. The system is multi-sectoral, with early childhood education under the auspices of the Welsh Government Department of Education, Social Justice and Welsh Language whereas childminding (home-based childcare provision), day nurseries and parent support are the responsibility of the Department of Health and Social Services. Considerable changes are currently underway to early years services, with policy focusing on creating a single high-quality approach to ECEC that is child centred (Welsh Government 2019).

Unlike in England, an overarching integrated policy framework was included in the Childcare, Play and Early Years Workforce Plan (Welsh Government 2017a) and continues to be reflected in the annual children's plan for Wales (Welsh Government 2022a) and in the development of the new Quality Framework for the sector.

Wales defines early years as the period from pre-birth to the end of the Foundation Phase. The statutory Foundation Phase curriculum framework covers 3 to 7 year-olds in both maintained schools (i.e. primary and nursery schools) and non-maintained settings (pre-schools, playgroups and day nurseries and Flying Start centres). Flying Start (Welsh Government 2017b) is a multi-disciplinary programme based primarily on the universal Health Visiting service that targets extra Health Visitors time and resources on families with children under 4 living in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Wales. Centre-based settings as well as early learning and language development sessions are part of the offer along with parent/family support and home visiting services provided according to assessed need.

In 2015, a statutory *Foundation Phase Profile* (Welsh Government 2016a) was introduced to ensure a nationally consistent baseline assessment during the reception year. This was part of the planned comprehensive *Early Years Development and Assessment Framework* across education and health sectors from birth to 7 years that had been introduced in 2013. The Foundation Phase Profile will also contribute evidence towards the new Early Years Outcomes Framework (Welsh Government 2016b) which provides a tool for results-based accountability that measure the effectiveness of local and national government policies across all aspects of children's health, care, development, wellbeing and safety. Following on from a review of the curriculum in Wales (Donaldson 2015), a new *Curriculum for Wales* for 3–16 year-olds (Welsh Government 2020a) and a *Curriculum for Funded Non-Maintained Nursery Settings* (Welsh Government 2022c) and new assessment arrangements are being developed.

The regulation of services for young children in Wales is not integrated under a single regulator as in England. Instead, Wales chose to keep separate regulation and inspection regimes with early education under ESTYN – the office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales – and day nurseries and family day care (home-based childcare provision, childminding) under the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) that operates a different set of quality indicators. Since 2019 the two organisations have worked together to undertake one inspection of care and education in regulated non-school settings up to the age of 12 and non-maintained settings that provide education to 3 and 4 year-olds that are eligible for part-time funding (ESTYN 2021).

Standards and qualifications for teachers (those with Qualified Teacher Status) and learning support staff are regulated by the Education Workforce Council (EWC 2022). Qualifications to work in early years settings other than schools are approved by Social Care Wales and are regulated by Qualifications Wales. They continue to relate to the national occupational standards set down by employers, workers and other stakeholders through the relevant authority for the sector –



Skills for Care and Development. Social Care Wales is also the registration body for qualified Social Workers; however, unlike in Scotland, there is currently no register of ECEC workers.

### 1.3 Scotland: ECEC governance

Scotland's legal, educational and qualifications frameworks have long been distinct from those of England and Wales. It has its own elected parliament that operates within a budget settlement determined under an agreed formula with Westminster and makes its own laws with the exclusion of UK-wide reserved matters such as defence, macro-economics and foreign policy. The Scottish Government governs a population of around 5.4 million (ONS 2022). After a close run referendum on independence in 2014, the Scottish parliament has received further delegation of responsibilities to include, for the first time, limited tax raising powers set out in the Scotland Act 2016 (Legislation.gov.uk 2016b).

Compulsory schooling in Scotland starts between 4½ and 5½ years of age. Children born in January and February (who would start aged 4½) have always been permitted to defer their school start date by one year. In 2021, the Scottish Government began a pilot scheme to enable children born from August who would normally start school aged 4½ to 5 to defer for an additional year in Early Learning and Childcare (Scottish Government 2020). It is planned that this will be fully implemented in 2023.

In Scotland, the term Early Learning and Care (ELC) is used rather than ECEC and the Scottish Government's early learning and childcare directorate leads on developing the sector in partnership with local authorities, agencies, the private and voluntary centre-based sector and childminders. Aspects of the provision, funding, staffing, regulation and inspection are split between the education and health and social care sectors.

There are two main bodies overseeing curriculum and practice in the sector: Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate. Staffing is predominantly governed by the Scottish Social Services Council which sets the standard for childhood practice qualifications and registers staff working in the sector.

National guidance for pre-birth to early primary school: *Realising the Ambition* (2020) was developed by Education Scotland (Education Scotland 2021). Early learning and care settings must also meet National Health and Social Care Standards, developed and inspected by the Care Inspectorate (Care Inspectorate 2017). In February 2022, the Care Inspectorate published *A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school aged childcare*, which sets out criteria linked to its health and social care standards (Care Inspectorate 2022). This framework is additional to Education Scotland's *How good is our early learning and childcare*, a self-assessment tool last updated in 2016 (Education Scotland 2016). *Curriculum for Excellence*, sets out education experiences and outcomes for children from age 3 to 18 (Education Scotland 2022).

All settings, including those in schools, must be registered with the **Care Inspectorate**. The Care Inspectorate conducts inspections in all early learning and childcare settings and in school-based early years settings inspects in partnership with Education Scotland, the agency responsible for school inspections. Partnership inspections include joint questionnaires, a joint self-assessment and reporting format and a care inspector present for inspection teams in early years settings that are part of primary schools. However, this partnership arrangement has been criticised in a recent consultation on education agencies (Scottish Government 2022b).

The Scottish Social Services Council sets the Standard for Childhood Practice and registers all leaders/managers of settings, practitioners and support workers. All practitioners are required to meet level 7 of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, while managers must also gain a BA or Professional Development Award (PDA) in childhood practice (level 9 SCQF). A 'graduate apprenticeship' has been developed which qualifies staff to work at practitioner level but



enables them to add 60 credits of level 9 (SCQF) management modules credits in order gain manager or lead status. This new qualification is being run by the University of the West of Scotland and University of the Highlands and Islands.

It was announced in March 2022 that The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) will be replaced by a new agency in 2024. Until then the SQA accredits all qualifications and is the sole examination and awarding body for both academic and vocational awards outside of universities. Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQ) at levels 1 to 8 (levels 1–5 EQF) in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) are based on UK-wide national occupational standards. The SCQF has a total of 12 levels up to PhD with a Bachelor’s degree with honours and a PDA at level 9 (level 6 EQF).

Early learning provision in schools may be overseen by senior school leaders, with Head Teachers registered as setting managers with the Care Inspectorate. Head Teachers are also registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) – the body that sets the standards for entry and career progression for the whole of the teaching profession and approves Initial Teacher Education courses leading to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) – and will have achieved the ‘Standard for Headship qualification’ (GTCS 2021). Some local authorities include teachers within their early years settings, or have Head Teachers as managers of multiple settings.

In March 2022, the Scottish Government announced the creation of three new education bodies: a **qualifications** agency (replacing the Scottish Qualifications Authority); a **professional learning, curriculum and assessment** agency and an **inspection** agency (the latter two replacing Education Scotland.) Following wide consultation, the planned operational date is 2024. Early learning and care were mentioned in relation to the importance of the new inspection agency setting a shared inspection framework with the Care Inspectorate (Scottish Government 2022a).

#### 1.4 Northern Ireland: ECEC governance

With a population of over 1.9 million (ONS 2022), the six counties of Northern Ireland form the smallest nation of the UK. It has a complex and often fraught history of governance both from Westminster and self-governance through an elected Assembly based in Stormont. Northern Ireland now has a devolved power sharing arrangement through a National Executive in which the main political parties representing the dominant protestant/unionist majority and the catholic/republican minority have both been guaranteed ministerial appointments and influence. As with Scotland and Wales, the devolved powers of the Northern Ireland Assembly extend across education, health and social welfare. The Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI) oversees all education services, including pre-school education and Sure Start. It delegates responsibility for administering early years grants and monitoring Sure Start to regional Childcare Partnerships.

The Sure Start programme provides a range of services for young children under 4 and their families including the Developmental Programmes for 2 to 3 year-olds. There are 39 Operational Sure Start Projects across Northern Ireland in the Top 25% Deprived Areas. Responsibility for Sure Start was originally transferred from the Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety to the Department for Education Northern Ireland (DENI) in 2006 along with the rest of early years services including childminding and childcare in order to co-locate responsibility within a single department.

The Department of Education launched *Learning to Learn: A Framework for Early Years Education and Learning* (DENI 2013) that set out a strategy for 3 to 6 year-olds from a narrower educational perspective with progress overseen by an Early Years Stakeholder Group representing providers as well as government interests.

Given that the compulsory school starting age is set at the September after a child's 4<sup>th</sup> birthday (the earliest in the UK), and the preponderance (62%) of school-based nursery class places for 3 year-olds over funded places in the PVI sector (DENI 2013), early years provision outside of schools is largely restricted to day care 0 to 4 year-olds, pre-school groups of mainly 3 year-olds and wrap-around care. Funded places are available for all 3 year-olds and for disadvantaged 2 year-olds (proposed changes mean that target 2 year-olds are likely to have separate provision in future). This is set at a minimum of 12.5 hours per week for 38 weeks in Northern Ireland compared to 30 hours in England, since September 2017.

Staffing ratios for the PVI sector are broadly the same as in England at 1:8 for 3 to 4 year-olds with a level 3 qualified leader. However, this requirement is currently in a state of transition and new leaders are required to hold a level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Care, Learning and Development or the Playwork equivalent in the case of out-of-school care. Meanwhile at least advisory access to someone with a higher level qualification is considered essential but, unlike in Scotland and Wales, this does not have to be a qualified teacher.

The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) regulates qualifications and issues curricular guidance for pre-school groups (3 year-olds) with funded early education places and separate curricular guidance for the Foundation Stage (6 to 8 year-olds) in schools.

The pre-school version (CCEA 2018) offers guidance on planning, observation, assessment and record keeping and wider issues such as equal opportunities as well as a curriculum framework. This is broadly similar to other parts of the UK but an emphasis given upfront to the arts and creativity is distinctive.

The Foundation Stage (CCEA 2020) builds on and extends the Learning to Learn Framework from 2013. It introduces Religious Education for the first time as agreed with the four main Christian Churches in Northern Ireland and incorporates 'mutual understanding' into Personal, Social and Emotional Development. These features reflect the unique history and issues of Northern Ireland. Key Stage 1 builds on this, focusing on similar areas as those of the Foundation Stage.

There is a strong tradition of parent/community-run pre-school groups affiliated to Early Years. In addition, churches of both denominations have had a greater role in the provision of education at all levels than in the rest of the United Kingdom. Building on the previous policy for Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education, which sought to develop mutual understanding and respect between different communities, the Shared Education Act was introduced in 2016 (DENI 2016).

As in other parts of the UK, only qualified teachers with QTS are allowed to lead classes in maintained nursery and primary schools. Standards for teachers are determined by the General Teaching Council Northern Ireland (GTCNI) (which also regulates teacher registration, initial teacher education and teachers' continuing professional development).

Regulation and inspection of early years services are split. Inspection of funded pre-school education, together with all other phases of education and the safeguarding of pupils within them, is vested in the Education and Training Inspectorate for Northern Ireland (ETINI). However, unlike Ofsted in England, the Education and Training Inspectorate is not responsible for the registration of pre-school groups or for wrap around care, day nurseries, childminders and other children's services. These aspects of early years are deemed care and are registered and inspected on an annual basis by specialist Early Years Teams of Social Workers based with the five local Health and Social Care Trusts.



## 2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

### 2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

In all four nations, classes in maintained (state-funded) schools and nurseries must be led by a Level 6 teacher with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), whereas the staffing requirements in the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sector remain diverse, though there is specific guidance about staff qualifications and ratios. The following tables provide an overview of regular contact staff by nation, first in the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sector (*Chapters 2.1.1 to 2.1.4*) and then in the Maintained sector (schools) (*Chapters 2.1.5 to 2.1.6*).

**Note from the SEEPRO editors:** In other country reports, the core professionals (i.e. staff with group or centre responsibility) in these tables are categorised according to one of five ECEC professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see *Box 1* at the end of this section). However, since job titles and qualification requirements are so highly variable in the UK, particularly in the PVI sectors of the four nations, a descriptor has been allocated only in those cases where a clear profile is visible.

#### 2.1.1 England: Regular contact staff in the PVI sector

Table 1

England: Regular contact staff in full-day and sessional care, children’s centres, family hubs and out-of-school provision by staff type

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age-range focus of initial professional education (IPE)	Minimum qualification requirement ECTS credits EQF level ISCED level
<b>Family Hub/ Children’s Centre Manager</b>  <i>Profile: Variable</i>	Family Hub/ Children’s Centre (0–18 or up to 25 for young people with SEND)	Senior Manager	Variable depend- ing on qualifica- tion	Usually Bachelor’s degree or equiva- lent with relevant professional qualifi- cation in Social Work (e.g. QQSW), Nursing (e.g. RGN) or Teaching (e.g. QTS or EYPS/EYTS)  ECTS credits: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2011: 6
<b>Early Years Teacher (EYTS)</b>  <i>Profile: Early Childhood Peda- gogy Professional</i>				
<b>Nursery</b>	Day Nurseries* (0–4 <sup>2</sup> ) or	Setting Manager	0–5	**From 2014 on- wards:

<sup>2</sup> **Editors’ note:** International data sources use varying ways of presenting the age range of children enrolled in ECEC settings. For the SEEPRO-3 reports we have chosen the following age-inclusive format: **0–2** years for children **up to** 3 years of age and **3–5** years for 3, 4, and 5 year-olds in countries with a primary school entry age of 6 years. In the UK, the corresponding formats vary according to the diverse forms of provision, but in general they are **0–4** and **2–4**, since compulsory schooling starts at age 5 (4 in Northern Ireland).

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age-range focus of initial professional education (IPE)	Minimum qualification requirement ECTS credits EQF level ISCED level
<b>Manager</b> or Person-in-Charge  <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional  Playgroup or <b>Pre-school Manager</b> or Leader  <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional	Family Hubs/ Children's Centres (0–18 or up to 25 for young people with SEND) plus parent support).  Mainly PVI sector  Community***/ PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2–4)  Children's Centres	Play-group/pre-school manager or Curriculum Leader		Early Years Educator award (see below)  ECTS credits: n/a <sup>3</sup> EQF: level 4 ISCED 2011: 4/3
<b>Group/Room Leader</b> OR  <b>Early Years Educator (EYE)</b>  <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional	Day Nurseries (0–4) or Family Hubs/ Children's Centres (0–18 or 25 for young people with SEND) plus parent support.  Community/PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2–4)	Qualified early years core pedagogue able to work independently and supervise junior staff	0–5	Early Years Educator 2 years upper secondary education plus GCSEs in Maths & English (or equivalent)  ECTS credits: n/a EQF level: 4 ISCED: 3
<b>Nursery Nurse</b> OR <b>Playgroup Worker</b> OR <b>Early Years Practitioner</b> OR <b>Early Years Educator (EYE)</b>	Day Nurseries (0–4) or Family Hubs/ Children's Centres (0–18 or up to 25 for young people with SEND) plus parent support.  Community/PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2–4)	Qualified early years core pedagogue able to work independently	0–5	Early Years Educator 2 years upper secondary education plus GCSEs in Maths & English (or equivalent)  ECTS credits: n/a EQF level: 4 ISCED 2011: 3
<b>Nursery Assistant</b> OR <b>Playgroup Assistant</b> OR <b>Special Needs</b>	Day Nurseries (0–4) or Family Hubs/Children's Centres (0–18 or up to 25 for young people with SEND)	Paid assistant working under supervision.	Not applicable	None mandatory. But must hold RQF level 2 Certificate in Early Education and Care to count within required

<sup>3</sup> n/a = not applicable

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age-range focus of initial professional education (IPE)	Minimum qualification requirement ECTS credits EQF level ISCED level
<b>Assistant</b>	plus parent support  Community/PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2–4)			50% ratio
<b>Apprentice</b>	Day Nurseries (0–5) or Family Hubs/ Children’s Centres (0–18 or up to 25 for young people with SEND) plus parent support.  Community/PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2–4)	Paid trainee working under supervision	Early Years (0–5)	Maths and English GCSE intermediate secondary RQF level 2  Working towards RQF level 3 (EQF 4) Early Years Educator award
<b>Parent Volunteer</b>	Family Hubs/ Children’s Centres (0–18 or up to 25 for young people with SEND) plus adult parent support.  Community/PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2–4)	Assistant across all areas working under supervision	Not applicable	Not applicable ****Disclosure and Barring Service check required
<b>Play Leader</b> <i>OR</i> <b>Play Worker</b> <i>OR</i> <b>Care Assistant</b>	Out-of-school care facility – before school breakfast club; after school club (3–10) Holiday Play scheme (3–10)	Leading group or activity in provision for young children out of school hours	Variable depending on qualification.  Playwork 5–16	None mandatory. Up to the manager to decide. Commonly will hold NVQ level 2/3 or Diploma in Playwork (EQF 3 or 4)

*Explanatory notes:*

\*In Day Nurseries that are part of chains, overall management responsibility may lie with a senior or area manager with day-to-day operation of the setting delegated to the local setting manager who may or may not have a substantial direct role with children. Proprietors of private nurseries are not required to hold any qualifications but must appoint a manager who does.

\*\*Transitional arrangements apply to other relevant level 3 qualifications started before 2014.

\*\*\*In community playgroups the management function for staff appointments, policy and budgets etc. is vested in a local community management committee with the Playgroup Leader having day-to-day responsibility for the operation of the group.

\*\*\*\*The Disclosure and Barring Service provides checks against police records and the statutory lists of those barred from working with children. All those who work with children and/or vulnerable adults must be checked including regular volunteers.

### 2.1.2 Wales: Regular contact staff in the PVI Sector

Early education and childcare services for children under 12 outside of schools (i.e. day nurseries, childminders, pre-schools, playgroups, out-of-school/holiday play schemes and Flying Start Centres) are regulated and inspected by the Care Inspectorate for Wales (CIW) and are subject to the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare in Wales (Welsh Government 2016c). Staff ratio requirements are the same in Wales as in England. Because ESTYN inspects the funded early learning component in all types of setting, some provision is subject to both forms of registration and inspection. Social Care Wales has overall responsibility for the development of the non-school ECEC workforce and provides a range of training resources for ECEC workers.

Table 2

**Wales: Regular contact staff in full-day and sessional care, Flying Start programmes and out-of-school provision by staff type**

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age-range focus of initial professional education	Minimum qualification requirement ECTS credits EQF level ISCED level
<b>Health Visitor</b>  <i>Profile:</i> Health Care Professional	May or may not be based in Flying Start Centre. Responsibility extends over whole programme including home visiting and parent support. 0–4 plus adults	Senior Manager	Lifelong (health) plus birth to 3 development	Usually Bachelor’s degree in Nursing plus relevant professional qualification in Health Visiting  ECTS credits: 180 EQF level. 6 ISCED 2011: 6
<b>Flying Start Leader</b>	Flying Start: day care and home visiting provision	Manager/ Leader	0–5	Diploma in Leadership for Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development (Management)  ECTS credits: n/a EQF level. 5 ISCED 2011: 5  Diploma**** in Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development ECTS credits: n/a EQF level. 3 or 4 ISCED 2011: 3
<b>Nursery Manager/Person in charge</b> <i>OR</i>	Day nurseries (0–4)	*Setting manager		
<b>Creche Manager</b> <i>OR</i>	Mainly PVI sector	Setting manager		
<b>Sessional Manager</b> <i>OR</i>	**Community/PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2–4)			
<b>Playgroup/ Pre-school Leader</b>	**Community/PVI playgroups and			

Job title	Main ECEC work-place settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age-range focus of initial professional education	Minimum qualification requirement ECTS credits EQF level ISCED level
<i>OR</i>	pre-schools (2–4)	Playgroup/ pre-school manager or curriculum leader		
<b>***Cylch Meithrin Leader</b>	Welsh-speaking playgroup or pre-school (2–4)			
<b>Deputy Manager</b> <i>OR</i> <b>Advanced Nursery Practitioner</b> <i>OR</i> <b>Room Leader</b>	Day Nurseries (0–4)  Community/PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2–4)	Senior practitioner with supervisory role	0–5	Diploma**** in Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development or equivalent (such as Early Years degrees with Early Years Practitioner Status).  ECTS credits: n/a EQF level: 3 or 4 ISCED 2011: 3
<b>Flying Start Practitioner</b>	Flying start settings including home visiting	Core pedagogue – able to work independently	Lifelong (health and parenting) plus birth to 3 development	To count within required ratios 100% of Flying Start, 100% of Foundation Phase (3-7) practitioners, 80% of other day nursery staff and 50% of sessional care staff must hold Diploma**** in Children’s Care Learning and Development or equivalent (Such as Early Years degrees with Early Years Practitioner Status).
<b>Nursery Practitioner</b>  <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional	Day Nurseries (0–4) or Children’s Centres (0–4 plus parent support).	Core pedagogue – able to work independently	0–5	To count within required ratios 100% of Flying Start, 100% of Foundation Phase (3-7) practitioners, 80% of other day nursery staff and 50% of sessional care staff must hold Diploma**** in Children’s Care Learning and Development or equivalent (Such as Early Years degrees with Early Years Practitioner Status).  ECTS credits: n/a EQF level. 3 or 4 ISCED 2011: 3
<b>Sessional/Playgroup Practitioner</b>	Community/PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2–4)	Core pedagogue – able to work independently	0–5	
<b>Flying Start Family Support Worker</b>  <b>Nursery Assistant</b>  <b>Sessional or Playgroup Assistant</b>	Family homes and within Flying Start centres  Day Nurseries (0–4)  Community/PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2–4)	Practitioner working predominantly with families  Paid assistant working under supervision.  Paid assistant working under supervision	Lifelong (health and parenting) plus birth to 3 development  0–5  0–5	Diploma**** in Children’s Care Learning and Development  None mandatory but Level 3 Diploma in Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development needed to count in qualified ratios: 80% day care; 50% sessional care or equivalent (Such as Early Years degrees with Early Years Practitioner Status).

Job title	Main ECEC work-place settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age-range focus of initial professional education	Minimum qualification requirement ECTS credits EQF level ISCED level
<b>Creche Assistant</b>  <b>Cylch Meithrin Assistant</b>	Under eights crèche facility	Paid assistant working under supervision  Paid assistant working under supervision	0–5  0–5	ECTS credits: n/a EQF level: 2 or 3 ISCED 2011: 2 or 3
<b>Apprentice</b>	Day Nurseries (0–4) or Children’s Centres (0–4 plus parent support) Community/PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2–4)	Paid trainee working under supervision	Early Years (0–5)	None mandatory: Intermediate/GCSEs advised. Working towards Level 2 Diploma in Children’s Care Learning and Development
<b>Parent Volunteer</b>	Children’s Centres (0–4 plus adult parent support). Community/PVI playgroups and pre-schools (2–4)	Assistant across all areas working under supervision	Not applicable	Not applicable ****Disclosure and Barring Service check required
<b>Senior Play Leader/ Person in charge</b>  <b>Play Worker</b>	Out-of-school care facility: before school breakfast club; after school club and holiday play schemes (4–10)	Leading group or activity in provision for young children out of school hours	4–16	Manager/Leader: Level 3 Diploma in Playwork  Playworkers: 50% must hold min. level 2 Diploma in Playwork  ECTS credits: n/a EQF level: 3 or 4 ISCED 2011: 3 or 4

*Explanatory notes:*

\*In day nurseries that are part of chains, overall management responsibility may lie with a senior or area manager with day-to-day operation of the setting delegated to the local setting manager who may or may not have a substantial direct role with children. Proprietors of private nurseries are not required to hold any qualifications but must appoint a manager who does.

\*\*In community playgroups the management function for staff appointments, policy and budgets etc. is vested in a local community management committee, with the Playgroup Leader having day-to-day responsibility for the operation of the group.

\*\*\*Cylch Meithrin are Welsh-speaking playgroups offering total immersion in the Welsh language

\*\*\*\*The Disclosure and Barring Service provides checks against police records and the statutory lists of those barred from working with children. All those who work with children and/or vulnerable adults must be checked including regular volunteers.

### 2.1.3 Scotland: Regular contact staff in the PVI Sector

In Scotland there are three types of professional registration for managing and working in early learning and childcare: Manager/lead practitioner; practitioner; support worker. *Table 3* below



provides an example of the range of professionals in these roles.

In early learning and childcare up to compulsory school age, all settings must be led by a SCQF level 9/EQF level 6 qualified manager, registered either with the Scottish Social Services Council or another professional body such as the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS). For example, a Head Teacher of a primary school may be registered as the manager of a nursery within a primary school setting that provides childcare services. A local authority children’s centre or standalone nursery, or a manager of a private or voluntary sector nursery manager must have, or must have a condition on their registration to gain, an EQF level 6 qualification (i.e. BA in Childhood Practice, Professional Development Award level 9). There is no requirement for a Qualified Teacher Status teacher to be present in any setting though teachers registered with the GTCS are present in some settings.

The language describing early learning and childcare settings varies according to historical identities and geography and services available. They include early years settings, children and family centres, nursery schools, and nursery classes. Some settings include children from birth to school age, some only those from 2/3–5 years, when funding entitlements begin. Some settings provide additional support for parents, such as parent/child groups.

Table 3

**Scotland: Regular contact staff in full-day and sessional care**

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age-range focus of initial professional education	Minimum qualification requirement ECTS credits EQF level ISCED level
<b>Head of Centre, Manager</b>	Nursery School, Children and Family Centre, Under 5s centre, Nursery	Manager/head	0–5	EQF Level 6 – management qualifications as well as a practice qualification (see below)  Management qualifications: BA Hons Childhood Practice (SCQF level 10) <b>or</b> PG Diploma or Masters in Childhood Practice (SCQF Level 11) Professional Development Award – SCQF Level 9 <b>or</b> Other professional registrations such as social work, nursing/midwifery, teacher, health professions council, community education, with 60 credits from BA childhood practice or PDA childhood practice.  ECTS Credits: 120



Job title	Main ECEC work- place settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age- range focus of initial professional education	Minimum qualification requirement ECTS credits EQF level ISCED level
				EQF level: 6 or 7 SCQF level: 9, 10 or 11 ISCED 2011: 6 or 7
<b>(Senior or Lead) Early Years Practitioner/ Childcare Officer/ Child development Educator</b>	All early years settings: School based Nursery classes, Nursery school, Private and voluntary sector settings, Children and family centres, Forest/nature kindergartens	May be in management role, may be working directly with children full time, may combine both roles. May also work with parents in partnership with health and social care professionals.  Qualification also appropriate for out-of-school care and work in children's/young people's residential settings.	0–5	SVQ Social Services (Children and Young People) or HNC  SCQF level: 7 EQF level: 5
<b>Support worker Assistant</b>	All early years settings: School based nursery classes, Nursery school, Private and voluntary sector settings, Children and family centres, Forest/nature kindergartens	Working with children alongside practitioners.  Qualification also appropriate for out-of-school care and work in children's/young people's residential settings.	0–5	May register without qualifications, but must gain them within 5 years.  National Certificate in Early Education and Childcare at SCQF Level 6  SVQ Social Services (Children and Young People) at SCQF Level 6  EQF level. 4



### 2.1.4 Northern Ireland: regular contact staff in the PVI Sector

A ‘Home Childcarer’ is a form of approved childcare introduced by the Government to allow parents to have approved childcare in their own home and to access childcare benefits and support that is made available by the Government against the cost. Equally families who have children with disabilities may benefit from childcare in their own home.

The minimum qualification requirements for staff working within the early years and childcare sector is set out within Standard 11 of the Minimum Standards for Childminding and Day Care for Children under Age 12. Level 5 qualifications are now established as the minimum attainment levels for Centre Leaders i.e. the person in charge/manager and deputy leaders in full-day care, crèche and sessional care (Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development (CCPLD) and Playwork at level 5). Room Supervisors/Team Leaders and staff who could deputise for the leader working under the supervision of the Manager are required to hold at, the very least, a qualification at level 3 in Early Years or Playwork. 50% of all other childcare staff should have as a minimum a qualification at level 2 in Early Years or Playwork as appropriate to the setting.

Playwork is identified as the most appropriate qualification for staff working in school-age childcare services (SACC).

Childminders for the first time must complete Health and Safety, Paediatric First Aid and Child Protection training every 3 years and are also encouraged to work towards level 2 or level 3 qualifications in Children’s Care Learning and Development or Playwork depending on their previous learning and experience.

It should be noted these are minimum qualification requirements and that staff holding higher Level qualifications as listed within the document are also deemed qualified and will meet regulatory requirements. A manager/leader who was currently employed prior to the publication of the Minimum Standards and who has an NVQ/QCF level 3 qualification in CCLD, Playwork or equivalent can apply for another manager/leader post without having to gain a RCF Level 5 qualification<sup>4</sup>. Those currently employed in a deputy manager or other childcare role are required to agree with the employer to undertake a level 5 qualification within an agreed period of time, if applying for the post of manager. In the event of a person acting in a manager or deputy manager role on a temporary basis, the planned arrangements for post holders to achieve their required level 5 qualification must be agreed with the Early Years Team in the local Registering Health and Social Care Trust Early Years team. All managers must have a current Safeguarding and Child Protection Certificate. If this is not the case, this must be achieved as part of the induction process and within one month of appointment. If the Manager is the Designated Child Protection Officer, evidence of certificated training must be in place prior to commencing duties.

### 2.1.5 England, Wales, Northern Ireland: Regular contact staff in the maintained sector (schools)

Given that the requirements for educational staff in schools derive from the same legislation and are broadly the same in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, *Table 4* applies to all three nations.

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<sup>4</sup> This was to ensure that manager/leaders with legacy qualifications were recognised and did not have to meet the new requirements.



Table 4

England, Wales and Northern Ireland: Regular contact staff in nursery schools and in nursery and reception classes in primary schools by staff type

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age-range focus of initial professional education (IPE)	Minimum qualification requirement ECTS credits EQF level ISCED level
<b>Head Teacher</b>  <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary and Primary School Professional	Nursery School (2–4) State or Independent sectors*  Primary School (2–10) State or Independent sectors*	Senior Manager (may have some direct teaching responsibilities depending on size of school)	Nursery 2, 3–5  Primary 2, 3 or 4–11	Bachelor's degree with UK Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) <b>plus</b> (as a rule) National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH)** (PQH in NI)  ECTS credits: 180 EQF level: 6 or 7 ISCED 2011: 6 or 7
<b>Head of Nursery Unit/Nursery</b> <i>OR</i> <b>Reception Class Teacher</b> <i>OR</i> <b>Primary Teacher (QTS)</b>	Nursery School (2–4) State or Independent sectors*  Primary School (2–10) State or Independent sectors*	Teacher in charge of nursery / reception unit <i>OR</i> individual class teacher/group leader	Nursery 2, 3–5  Primary 2, 3 or 4–11	Bachelor's degree with UK Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)  ECTS credits: 180 EQF level. 6 ISCED 2011: 6
<b>Nursery Nurse</b> <i>OR</i> <b>Nursery Assistant</b> <i>OR</i> <b>Classroom Assistant</b> <i>OR</i> <b>Teaching Assistant</b> <i>OR</i> <b>Special Needs Assistant</b>	Nursery School (2–4) State or Independent sectors*  Primary School (2–10) State or Independent sectors*	Qualified assistant to class teacher working under teacher's direction	Early Years 0–5  Primary 5–16	<b>England:</b> from 2014 Early Years Educator plus GCSEs in Maths & English <i>OR</i> Certificate/Diploma Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools  <b>Wales &amp; Northern Ireland:</b> Diploma in Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development  ECTS credits: n/a EQF level. 4 ISCED 2011: 3
<b>Classroom Assistant</b> <i>OR</i> <b>Teaching Assistant</b> <i>OR</i>	Nursery School (2–4) State or Independent sectors*  Primary School	Support worker assisting teacher (may be assigned to a particular	Early Years 0–5  Schools 5–16	<b>England:</b> None mandatory but may hold certificate in: Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools <i>OR</i>

Job title	Main ECEC work-place settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age-range focus of initial professional education (IPE)	Minimum qualification requirement ECTS credits EQF level ISCED level
<b>Special Needs Assistant</b>	(2–10) State or Independent sectors*	child with SEN)		Specialist Support for Teaching and Learning in Schools  <b>Wales and Northern Ireland:</b> None mandatory but may hold Diploma in Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development
<b>Apprentice</b>	Nursery School (2–4) State or Independent sectors**  Primary School (2–10) State or Independent sectors	Paid trainee working under supervision	Early Years 0–5	Maths and English GCSE secondary level Working towards level 3 award in relevant sector
<b>Parent Volunteer</b>	Nursery School (2–4) State or Independent sectors  Primary School (2–10) State or Independent sectors*	Usually allocated particular tasks such as hearing children read	Not applicable	Not applicable ***Disclosure and Barring Service check required
<b>Play Leader / Play Worker</b>	Out-of-school care facility: before school breakfast club; after school club (3–10)  Holiday Play scheme (3–10)	Leading group or activity in provision for young children out of school hours	Variable depending on qualification.  Playwork 5–16	No compulsory requirement – decision to employ lies with manager. Commonly will hold level 2 or 3 or Diploma in Playwork.

*Explanatory notes:*

\*Controlled/Maintained/Integrated/Irish Medium sector in NI

\*\*Head teachers are expected to hold or be working towards the post National Professional Qualification for Headship prior to appointment or shortly afterwards.

\*\*\*The Disclosure and Barring service provide checks against police records and the statutory lists of those barred from working with children. All those who work with children and/or vulnerable adults must be checked including regular volunteers.

## 2.1.6 Scotland: Regular contact staff in the maintained sector (schools)

Table 5

Scotland: Regular contact staff in nursery schools and in nursery and reception classes in primary schools by staff type

Job title	Main ECEC work- place settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age- range focus of initial professional education (IPE)	Minimum qualification requirement ECTS credits EQF level ISCED level
<b>Head Teacher</b>  <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary and/or Primary Education Professional	Head Teacher of a primary school with responsibility for a nursery class or nursery  May include children from birth to 5½ years.	Manager/ head	3–12  Early years to upper primary	BA Degree/Postgraduate degree Teaching qualification and registered with General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS) and hold the Standard for Headship, 60 credit post-graduate certificate at SCQF level: 11 EQF level: 7
<b>Primary (Early Years) Teacher</b>  <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary and/or Primary Education Professional	Nursery class in nursery school  Nursery class in primary school 3–4 years  Combined reception/nursery unit in primary schools 3–5 years	Class teacher <i>OR</i> Teacher in charge of Nursery/ Reception unit	3–12  <b>Note:</b> no specific requirement for early years training	Bachelor's degree with QTS. Registered with GTCS.  ECTS credits: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2011: 6
<b>Primary (Early Years) Teacher</b>  <i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary and/or Primary Education Professional	Reception class in primary school 4½–5½  Primary class in primary school 5½–12 years	Class Teacher	4½–5½  5½–12	Bachelor's degree with QTS. Registered with GTCS.  ECTS credits: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2011: 6
<b>Classroom Assistant</b> <i>OR</i> <b>Teaching Assistant</b> <i>OR</i> <b>Special Needs Assistant</b>	Reception class in primary school 4½–5½  Primary class in primary school 5½–12 years	Assistant to class teacher	n/a	No formal qualifications required.  Advised: SVQ 2 (Level 4 EQF/level 3 ISCED) in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools
<b>Apprentice</b>	Nursery class in nursery or primary school 3–4 years	Trainee working under direction	n/a	Intermediate certificate/ National Award 2 or higher school certificate or SVQ2

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age-range focus of initial professional education (IPE)	Minimum qualification requirement ECTS credits EQF level ISCED level
	Combined reception/nursery unit 3–5 years Reception class 4½–5½ Primary class 4½–11 years			Working towards SVQ level 3 (EQF level 4) in Children and young people’s services
<b>Volunteer</b> (usually parent)	Nursery class in nursery or primary school Combined reception/nursery unit Reception class in primary school	Usually allocated particular tasks such as hearing children read	n/a	**Police check from Disclosure Scotland only

*Explanatory notes:*

\*Head Teachers are expected to have completed the ‘Into Headship’ programme prior to appointment or shortly afterwards. This is post-graduate in level but not sufficient in itself for the award of a Bologna second cycle degree.

\*\*Disclosure Scotland provides checks against police records and the statutory lists of those barred from working with children. All those who work with children and/or vulnerable adults must be checked including regular volunteers.

*Box 1*

**SEEPRO profile categories for ECEC core professionals** (adapted from Oberhuemer, Schreyer, and Neuman 2010)

- **Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional** (specialist focus, 0–6/7 years)
- **Pre-primary Education Professional** (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- **Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional** (focus on pre-primary *and* primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- **Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional** (mainly broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- **Social Care/Health Care Professional** (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

## 2.2 Centre leader

All the four nations of the UK have different qualification requirements (see *Tables 1–5*), job descriptions and pay scales in the **PVI sector**. In Family Hubs/Children’s Centres the Centre Leader will usually have responsibility for a multi-professional team from health, education and social care.

In the **maintained sector**, Nursery and Nursery School Leaders will be qualified teachers and have requirements to complete headship leadership programmes. Pay scales will vary as will the role of the head, depending on the type of setting it is. For example, some leaders are focused on management responsibilities only, whereas others have additional teaching responsibilities.

## 2.3 Centre-based posts of responsibility

All settings across the UK have people with specific responsibilities; the names, job descriptions and remuneration, if any, will vary from setting to setting. All settings will have practitioners responsible for safeguarding and special needs. Country specific information is given below.

**England/Wales/Northern Ireland:** The minimum qualification for any role of responsibility in the PVI sector in England is the level 3 Early Educator qualification or equivalent. In Northern Ireland and Wales, all Deputy Managers and Room Leaders require a level 5 qualification (Diploma in Leadership for Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development or equivalent). Although training qualifications are available in, for example, pedagogical lead, special needs and safeguarding, it is up to the individual settings to decide on remuneration. Deputy Head Teachers and classroom teachers in Maintained Nurseries or Schools will have Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and may have specific responsibilities such as Foundation Lead, which would usually attract additional salary or remission. In Northern Ireland, if applying for the post of manager, persons currently employed in a deputy manager or other childcare role are required to sign an agreement with the employer to undertake a level 5 qualification within a specified period of time. In the event of a person acting in a manager or deputy manager role on a temporary basis, the planned arrangements for post holders to achieve their required level 5 qualification must be agreed with the Early Years Team in the local Registering Health and Social Care Trust Early Years team.

**Scotland:** All post holders with specialist responsibilities must have SVQ Social Services (Children and Young People) or HNC level 7 SCQF (EQF level 5) and in schools hold a teaching qualification.

## 2.4 Co-ordinating and supervisory staff

Practice in this area varies across the UK, is setting dependent and can be fulfilled by both internal or external practitioners. For example, a PVI chain may have specific roles to coordinate training across all their settings, or regionally. Some local authorities will have advisory teams, often holding a teaching or equivalent qualification to support in certain areas, including improving practice. Those in settings usually hold level 5 qualifications in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland and Level 3 in England. In Northern Ireland, Room Supervisors/Team Leaders and staff who could deputise for the leader working under the supervision of the Manager are required to hold, at the very least, a qualification at level 3 in Early Years or Playwork. In Maintained nurseries and schools these roles usually require a teaching qualification.

## 2.5 Specialist support staff

There are a range of specialist roles within the early years. Some of these roles are setting-based, such as safeguarding, or specific roles in relation to, for example, special education or forest schools. Others are external to the setting, such as Health Visitors, Social Workers and Speech and Language Therapists. In schools, the person responsible for special needs (SENCo) must have mandatory training and all involved in safeguarding must receive regular training.



### 3. Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

#### 3.1 England: structural composition of ECEC workforce

Table 6

England: Full-day care and sessional care in PVI Sector: all staff types and highest qualification

Staff categories	2023 / Proportion of workforce in all group-based care in %
Staff with at least a level 6 qualification (degree) EQF 6/ISCED 6	11
Staff with at least a level 5 qualification (Foundation Degree/Diploma/training qualification) (EQF/ISCED 5)	4
Staff with at least a level 4 qualification (post-secondary) EQF 4/ISCED 4	5
Staff with at least a level 3 qualification (Early Educator/A levels/training qualification) (upper secondary) EQF 4/ISCED 3	85
Unqualified staff	No data
Male staff	2
BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) staff or staff with background of migration	18

Source: Childcare and Early Years Providers Survey 2023 (DfE 2023a)

Table 7

England: Proportions of staff in school-based provision offering nursery and maintained nursery schools and classes by highest qualification achieved

Staff categories	2023 / Proportion of workforce	
	In primary schools, in %	In separate nursery schools, in %
Staff with at least level 6 qualification (degree)* EQF/ISCED 6	34	25
Staff with at least level 5 qualification (Foundation Degree/Diploma/training qualification) EQF 5/ISCED 5	4	5
Staff with at least level 4 qualification (post-secondary) EQF 4/ISCED 4	5	4
Staff with at least a level 3 qualification (Early Educator/A levels/training qualification) (upper secondary) EQF 4/ISCED 3	85	83
Volunteers	21	38
Male staff	2	
BME (Black and ethnic Minority) staff or staff with background of migration	16	

Source: Childcare and Early Years Providers Survey 2023 (DfE 2023a)

\*Note: Only those with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) may lead classes/units in maintained nursery and primary schools in the UK

### 3.2 Wales: Structural composition of ECEC workforce

It is difficult to gain a full picture of the qualifications, gender and ethnicity of the workforce in Wales. The *Childcare, Play and Early Years and Workforce Plan* (Welsh Government 2017a) estimated approximately 23,300 persons working in childcare and Foundation Stage settings, the majority of whom are women. According to the *Review of the Childcare Sector* (Welsh Government 2018) the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is the key source for information, but their data is not always reliable. The review estimated that 60% of the workforce had a level 3 NVQ qualification (EQF 4/ISCED 3) with a similar percentage holding the qualification in Child's Care Learning and Development (CCLD). They estimated that only 1% of the workforce held a CCLD qualification at level 6 and they were mainly employed in full-day care settings. School data is collected annually by the Education Workforce Council (EWC). In 2021, 0.1% (39) of teachers and 0.2% (70) of registered learning support workers were employed in school-based nurseries. There are no specific data about gender or ethnicity for this phase of education, though overall data for registered teachers in Wales indicated that 91.6% were White, 0.5% of the were Asian/Asian British and 0.2% were Black/African/Caribbean/Black British.

### 3.3 Scotland: Structural composition of ECEC workforce

Table 8

Scotland: Structural composition of ECEC workforce

Staff categories	2021, Number/Proportion of workforce
Staff with highest qualification (BA Childhood Practice, Professional Development Award level 9) EQF/ISCED 6	This is a requirement for managers of day care for children, including out-of-school care. SSSC* data state that there are 3,304 registrations of managers in Scotland, 46% of which have registered to work towards a higher qualification. The 2021 School Census** states that there were 3,150 graduates (appropriate qualification) in early years settings providing Government-funded places, with 1,533 undertaking the Childhood Practice degree.
Head Teacher/Teacher  QTS Degree	980 teachers are listed as working in the early learning and childcare sector. It is not clear whether these are working as practitioners in a setting with children or as managers, i.e. Head Teacher, unlikely to be working directly with children.
Staff with specialist vocational qualification (post-secondary) SVQ 3 or Higher National Certificate HNC – level 7 SCQF – Equivalent to EQF level 5	This is a requirement for practitioners in day care for children – (this figure includes out-of-school care). There are 34,721 registrations of practitioners in Scotland, of which 16% have a registration with a condition, which suggests they are working towards a qualification at this level but are likely to have a lower qualification.
Staff with non-specialist qualification. Unqualified staff	Unknown. Only relevant qualifications are recorded. There are 8,979 registrations of support workers in Scotland, of which 56% have a non-specialist qualification and 4,015 (44%) have no qualification at all.
Male staff	<b>4%</b>

Staff categories	2021, Number/Proportion of workforce
Staff with a BME (black and minority ethnic) background	1% of staff reporting ethnicity
Staff with disability	2% of staff report having a disability.

\*Source: SSSC 2021; \*\* Source: Scottish Government 2021

### 3.4 Northern Ireland: Structural composition of ECEC workforce

The way that publicly available statistics are held makes it difficult to disaggregate data for difference sections of the early years workforce in Northern Ireland.

## 4. Initial professional education (IPE)

### 4.1 Initial qualifying routes – Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)

#### 4.1.1 England, Wales and Northern Ireland: QTS qualifying routes

Initial Teacher Training/Education (ITT or ITE – both terms are in use) leading to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) is broadly similar, and is mutually recognised, across all the nations of the UK though the precise detail of routes and professional standards varies. ITT for England, Wales and Northern Ireland are presented here as one table while Scotland is presented separately due to the differences in nomenclature for entry requirements and degrees.

Table 9

#### England, Wales and Northern Ireland: Early Years/Primary Teachers with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)

<b>Title: <i>Primary (Early Years) Teacher (3–7) with QTS status*</i></b> <b>Profile: Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional</b>
<p><b>Entry requirements</b> for all forms of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS): 12 years of schooling, school leaving certificate (A-levels/equivalent), intermediate school certificate passes (GCSE) in English, Maths and a science subject plus success in prescribed professional tests in English and Maths and rigorous interview.</p> <p><b>Professional studies:</b> All study routes are conducted under the auspices of the relevant regulating authority for ITT*. All routes lead to the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) BEd or BA in Education: 3- or 4-year full-time undergraduate honours degree programme at HEI (Higher Education Institution) focusing primarily on education related subjects. Level 6 EQF</li> <li>(2) BA or BSc: 3 or 4-year full-time undergraduate honours degree programme at HEI focusing primarily on core curriculum subject. Level 6 EQF as precursor to routes 3,4,5, and 6</li> <li>(3) PGCE – Professional Graduate Certificate of Education/Postgraduate Certificate of Education: One or 2 year full-time postgraduate course leading to QTS; postgraduate option includes some Master’s level 7 (EQF) work, professional option undergraduate level 6 only.</li> <li>(4) SCITT/School Direct – school centred initial teacher training with QTS: Entrants must be graduates and undertake a one-year programme based on two schools (not available in Wales)</li> <li>(5) Teach First – innovative two-year salaried leadership development and teacher training programme run by charitable foundation in conjunction with partner HEIs for graduates with commitment to work in socially disadvantaged areas</li> <li>(6) Graduate Teacher Programme (Wales only): following agreed study/training programme in conjunction with one of the 3 approved ITT centres while employed as an unqualified teacher in a school.</li> </ol>

**Title: Primary (Early Years) Teacher (3–7) with QTS status\***

**Profile:** Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional

(7) Postgraduate Teaching Apprenticeships (England only). This route allows trainee teachers to be employed in schools, combining paid employment and training funded through the Apprenticeship Levy.

**Awards:**

- (1) Bachelor of Education (Hons) with QTS
- (2) Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Sciences (Hons) with QTS
- (3) PGCE – Professional Graduate Certificate of Education/Postgraduate Certificate of Education
- (4) QTS only. Must be linked to HEI for optional Professional Graduate Certificate
- (5) PGCE – Postgraduate Certificate of Education after one year. Option of Master’s Degree in year two.
- (6) QTS only. Optional Professional Graduate Certificate

**ECTS credits:** 180 or more, depending on route chosen

**EQF level:** 6\*\* or 7

**ISCED 2011:** 6 or 7, depending on qualification route. BEd/BAEd = ISCED 655; entry requirement for all other routes = ISCED 650.

**Main ECEC workplaces:** nursery class in nursery school (2, 3 and 4 year-olds depending on school); nursery class in primary school (2, 3 and 4 year-olds depending on school); combined reception/nursery unit in primary schools (3 to 5 year-olds); reception class in primary school (compulsory education, 4 to 5 year-olds); class leader, lead teacher/curriculum leader in children’s centre, Flying Start Centre or supporting private, voluntary and independent sector settings (0–4 years).

**Notes:**

\*Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) is awarded by the Department for Education in England, the Education Council (EWC) in Wales and the General Teaching Council in Northern Ireland (GTCNI). QTS confers ‘License to Practice’ as a teacher in maintained schools and other provision. Education, training and assessment for the status is solely via approved providers of Initial Teacher Training (ITT).

\*\*Almost all undergraduate degree programmes in the UK are now at Honours level which means they comply with full requirements for 180 ECTS credits at EQF/ISCED level 6. Ordinary Degrees contain less than the full 60 ECTS credits equivalent at level 6 and are only awarded as a fall-back in exceptional circumstances. Theoretically, an Ordinary Degree is still acceptable for QTS.

#### 4.1.2 Scotland: QTS qualifying routes

In Scotland, the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) regulates all aspects of IPE and subsequent stages of education and training for teachers, accredits university programmes leading to QTS, acts as a clearing house and administers the Teacher Induction Scheme. All teachers working in Scotland are required to register with the GTCS and the annual registration fee provides the regulator with an income. Once registered, teachers must adhere to the GTCS professional code of conduct. It has the power to investigate complaints/accusations of abuse and to remove a teacher from the register if found to be in serious breach of the code.

Table 10

**Scotland: Primary/Pre-Primary Teachers with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) – registered with GTCS**

**Title: Qualified Primary Teacher with QTS (4–12)**

**Profile:** Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional

**Entry requirements:\***

12 years of schooling, *plus*

(a) A National Qualification at SCQF level 6/7 (EQF level 3), for example Higher or Advanced Higher Award, one of which must be in English (SCQF 6) *and*

**Title: Qualified Primary Teacher with QTS (4–12)**  
**Profile: Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional**

(b) A National Qualification Course Award at SCQF level 5 (EQF level 2), one of which must be Mathematics.

In addition, all applicants must be members of the Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme following criminal record checks.

**Professional studies:**

There are **3 main routes** leading to the award of QTS:

- (1) \*\* 4-year full-time combined undergraduate degree at University leading to a named award which *includes* QTS Level 6 EQF/ISCED
- (2) \*\* 4-year full-time concurrent undergraduate degree leading to a named award *plus a separate* teaching qualification
- (3) a one-year (or equivalent part-time) Professional Graduate Diploma of Education following on from a successfully completed undergraduate degree programme.

**Awards:**

- (1) \*\* "Master" of Education/Primary Education or BA Hons in Education /Primary Education (QTS fully integrated)
- (2) \*\*\* "Master" of Education /Primary Education or BA Hons in Education /Primary Education *plus* QTS
- (3) PGDE Professional Graduate Diploma in Education/ Primary Education

**ECTS credits:** 180 or more, depending on route chosen

**EQF level:** 6 or 7

**ISCED 2011:** 6 or 7, depending on qualification route (Routes 1 and 2 = ISCED 655. The entry requirement for PGDE = ISCED 650)

**Main ECEC workplaces:** nursery class in nursery school (3 and 4 year-olds); nursery class in primary school (3 and 4 year-olds, depending on school); combined reception / nursery unit in primary schools (3 to 5 year-olds); reception class in primary school (5 year-olds); primary class in primary school (5 to 12 year-olds); Early Years Teacher (regular within setting or external/ad-hoc) in Local Authority or private and voluntary pre-school providers under partnership agreement (mainly 3 to 5 years).

*Notes:*

\*Each university sets its own entry requirements which are normally higher than the minimum because of competition for places.

\*\*Scottish undergraduate degrees are traditionally 4 years (compared to 3 in England and Wales). This is normally explained as being related to the greater breadth (and hence less subject specialisation) in the school leaving certificate (Scottish Higher system).

\*\*\*In Scotland, by convention the older universities name their undergraduate degrees 'Masters', although they are not at Master's level and only comply with Bologna First Cycle Degrees at EQF level 6.

## 4.2 Initial qualifying routes (non-QTS)

### 4.2.1 England

Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) was introduced in England in 2013 as a replacement for the broader based Early Years Professional Status. It is awarded by the National Council for Teaching and Leadership (an executive agency of the Department for Education). EYTS does **NOT** confer QTS for employment in maintained schools throughout the UK. Those with EYTS may only be employed as unqualified teachers or support staff in maintained schools and are not subject to the same terms and conditions as teachers. However, those with EYTS may be employed as teachers in independent schools and also in the increasing number of state supported free schools and academies, as well as teachers/ leaders/ managers throughout the PVI sector. Education, training and assessment for the status takes place via approved providers of Initial Teacher Training (ITT).

Table 11

England: Early Years Teachers with EYTS

<p><b>Title: <i>Early Years Teacher (0–5) with EYTS</i></b>  <b>Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</b></p>
<p><b>Entry requirements:</b> 12 years of schooling, school leaving certificate (A-levels/equivalent), intermediate school certificate passes (GCSE) in English, Maths and a science subject.</p> <p><b>Professional studies:</b> All routes to EYTS (see below) are usually conducted in association with a higher education institution although some routes are provided by training providers.</p> <p>(1) <i>Undergraduate Entry:</i> BA (Hons) ECS: 3 or 4-year full-time undergraduate Bachelor of Early Childhood Studies course with EYTS at a University/ Higher Education Institute (level 6 EQF: 180 ECTS credits).</p> <p>(2) <i>Graduate Entry</i> One-year full-time postgraduate course at HEI leading to EYTS designed for graduates from any discipline with little or no experience of work with young children; postgraduate option includes some Master’s level 7 (EQF) study, professional option includes undergraduate honours level 6 only.</p> <p>(3) <i>Graduate Employment-based:</i> For graduates with relevant or non-relevant degree plus experience: 9 -12 months of part-time study at HEI leading to EYTS while employed in relevant role.</p> <p>(4) <i>Undergraduate Route:</i> Three or four-year degree in early years that leads to award of EYTS.</p> <p>(5) <i>Assessment only route:</i> For graduates with relevant degree and extensive relevant experience: 3 months in which to demonstrate and be assessed across all aspects of EYTS standards.</p> <p><b>Awards:</b></p> <p>(1) *Bachelor of Early Childhood Studies or equivalent (min 3 year honours degree) with EYTS</p> <p>(2) PGCEYE – Professional Graduate Certificate of Early Years Education with EYTS /Postgraduate Certificate of Early Years Education with EYTS</p> <p>(3) EYTS only. Optional Professional Graduate Certificate</p> <p>(4) EYTS only. Must be linked to HEI for optional Professional Graduate Certificate</p> <p>(5) EYTS only</p> <p><b>ECTS credits:</b> 180 or more, depending on chosen route</p> <p><b>EQF level:</b> 6 or 7</p> <p><b>ISCED 2011:</b> 6 or 7, depending on route taken. BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies = ISCED 655. Entry requirement for other routes = ISCED 650</p> <p><b>Main ECEC workplaces:</b> nursery class, nursery school (2, 3 and 4 year-olds, depending on school); nursery class in primary school (2, 3 and 4 year-olds, depending on school, working under the direction of lead teacher); combined reception/nursery unit in primary schools (3 to 5 year-olds, working under direction of unit head); reception class in primary school (compulsory education, 4 to 5 year-olds; lead teacher in children’s centre or private, voluntary and independent sector settings including those registered as schools (2–4 or 0–4 years); leader/manager in smaller pre-schools, playgroups and day nurseries (PVI sector, 2–4 or 0–4 years); curriculum leader in larger pre-schools, playgroups and day nurseries (PVI sector, 2–4 or 0–4)</p>

*Note:*

\*The undergraduate route to EYTS is linked to a BA degree that meets the subject benchmarking statement of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education related to Early Childhood Studies.

The Early Years Educator (see *Table 12*), introduced from 2013, is a RQF level 3 (EQF 4/ISCED 3) qualification that meets the prescribed standards and other requirements of the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) but is awarded by a range of independent awarding bodies (such as CACHE, Edexcel and City and Guilds) that are regulated by Ofqual. Relevant study can be undertaken at a broad range of schools and Colleges of Further Education or in employment. Assessment practice must be consistent with the assessment principles set down by the Skills for Care and Development – the relevant sector skills body.

Table 12

**England: Early Years Educator**

<p><b>Title: <i>Early Years Educator</i></b> (core pedagogue with various job titles)  <b>Profile:</b> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>
<p><b>Entry requirements:</b> Minimum age 16. 10 years’ schooling and intermediate school leaving certificate (GCSE) in at least 5 subjects including Maths and English.</p> <p><b>Professional studies:</b></p> <p>(1) <i>RQF level 3 Certificate and Diploma in Childcare and Education</i>. Designed as two years full-time study in a school or college of further education with extensive placements. License to practice.</p> <p>(2) <i>RQF level 3 Diploma in Early Years Education and Care</i> or <i>Level 3 Diploma for the Early Years Workforce</i> depending on options. May be studied part-time by those in employment. Equivalent to one – two years of full-time study. License to practice.</p> <p><b>Awards:</b></p> <p>(1) Nested suite of awards building sufficient credit points for admission to HE and award of Level 3 Diploma encompassing EYE license to practice</p> <p>(2) Single award of Level 3 Diploma encompassing EYE license to practice.</p> <p><b>ECTS credits:</b> not applicable</p> <p><b>EQF level:</b> 4</p> <p><b>ISCED 2011:</b> 3</p> <p><b>Main ECEC workplaces:</b> <i>Day nursery (0 to 4 years); Pre-school/playgroup (2/3 to 4 years), Children’s Centre (0 to 5 years)</i></p>

*Note:*

Exact name of qualification depends on choice of Awarding Body and optional units which confer some degree of specialism around required core specified in qualification criteria by the Department for Education.

In 2020, the Government introduced T Levels (equivalent to ‘A’ Levels), with Education and Childcare being among the first to be launched. Embedded in the qualification are the Early Years Educator standards to ensure those with the T Level meet the full and relevant criteria for early years practice (HM Government n. d.)

There are no minimum qualification requirements for Teaching Assistants or Special Needs Assistants in maintained nursery or primary schools; however, the above EYE award or its predecessors might be considered relevant and helpful, particularly for the nursery age group.

**4.2.2 Wales: Initial ECEC qualifying routes (non-QTS)**

Level 4 and 5 Diplomas have been developed for leaders and managers of practice that build on, and provide a progression route from the established level 2 and 3 Certificate/Diploma in Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development. Currently it is only compulsory for those leading Flying Start programmes in Wales.

Table 13

**Wales: Lead practitioners/managers of early years services**

<p><b>Title: Leadership for Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development 0–19</b>  <b>Profile:</b> Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>
<p><b>Entry requirements:</b> Minimum age 19. Other requirements at discretion of Approved Centre depending on experience.</p> <p><b>Professional studies:</b></p> <p>1. Full time education and training route: 1 – 2 years in Further and Higher Education College with extensive work placements. Maybe taken as part of wider Degree or Higher National Diploma programme.</p>

<b>Title: Leadership for Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development 0–19</b> <b>Profile: Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional</b>
<p>2. Work-based route: Around 12–18 months part-time study (in-service training and/or distance learning or day release) while in full time employment.</p> <p><b>Awards:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Level 4 Diploma in Leadership for Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development (Management) (Wales)*</li> <li>2. Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development (Management) (Wales and Northern Ireland) plus other HE credit-bearing awards</li> <li>3. Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development (Management) (Wales and Northern Ireland)</li> </ol> <p><b>ECTS credits:</b> Depends on route chosen</p> <p><b>EQF level:</b> 5</p> <p><b>ISCED 2011:</b> Depends on route.</p> <p><b>Main ECEC workplaces:</b> Flying Start/Sure Start children’s centre (0 to 4 years plus parent support); Flying Start home visiting programme; family support programmes for parents with children 0–4 years.</p> <p>*Level 4 is knowledge based and must be undertaken before completing the new Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development (Management) (Wales).</p>

The Level 3 (EQF 4) Diploma in Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development (*Table 14*) is the minimum requirement for counting as a qualified core professional in Wales and Northern Ireland. Relevant study can be undertaken at a broad range of schools and colleges or in employment.

*Table 14*

**Wales: Early Years Services Practitioner** (core professional)

<b>Title: Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development practitioner</b> (various job titles) <b>Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</b>
<p><b>Entry requirements:</b> Minimum age 16. 10 years schooling. Other requirements at discretion of Approved Centre depending on experience.</p> <p><b>Professional studies:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Full time education and training route:</b> Two years in school or FE College as part of wider general/vocational education and training programme with work placements. Equivalent qualification can be obtained through studying an Early Years Bachelor’s degree or Diploma of Higher Education with Early Years Practitioner Status (EYPS)*.</li> <li>2. <b>Work-based route:</b> Around 12–18 months of part-time study (in-service training and/or distance learning or day release) while in full time employment.</li> <li>3. <b>Apprenticeship route:</b> Normally 2 years of part time study and training as part of wider general or vocational education programme while employed as trainee.</li> </ol> <p><b>Awards:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Level 3 Diploma in Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development (Wales and Northern Ireland) – maybe combined with additional qualifications such as GCSEs and ‘A’ levels or other academic credit-bearing award.</li> <li>2. Level 3 Diploma in Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development (Wales and Northern Ireland) only</li> <li>3. Level 3 Diploma in Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development (Wales and Northern Ireland) – combined with additional generic education and skills awards.</li> <li>4. BA Early Years Education and Care/Early Childhood with Early Years Practitioner Status*.</li> <li>5. Higher Education Diploma in Early Years Education and Care/Early Childhood with Early Years Practitioner Status*.</li> </ol> <p><b>ECTS credits:</b> n/a</p>



<p><b>Title: Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development practitioner</b> (various job titles)  <b>Profile:</b> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>
<p><b>EQF level:</b> 4  <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 3  <b>Main ECEC workplaces:</b> day nursery (0–4 years); pre-school/playgroup (2/3 to 4 years); <i>Flying Start</i> children’s centre/home visiting programme (0–4 years)</p>

\*Note: Precise name may vary depending on training provider and choice of options. Higher National Certificates (HNCs) are predominantly provided by Further and Higher Education Colleges for students continuing in full-time education and training but with a significant component of work placements.

As in England, there are currently no minimum qualification requirements for Teaching Assistants or Special Needs Assistants in maintained nursery or primary schools in Wales and Northern Ireland, however the above CCLD award might be considered relevant and helpful, particularly for the nursery age group, as well as qualifications in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools which are not detailed here.

#### 4.2.3 Scotland: Initial ECEC qualifying routes (non-QTS)

Outside the school sector, all Childcare Workers in Scotland are regulated by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) which sets professional standards, registers suitably qualified workers and deals with complaints against individuals. There are three levels of registration: (1) Lead Practitioner/Manager – graduate (SCQF level 9 EQF level 6) standard in Childhood Practice for leading any service for children and young people; (2) Core/Independent Practitioner – SCQF level 7, EQF level 5; (3) Support worker – SCQF level 6, EQF level 4 – working under direction. Implementation of the new requirements will take some years, therefore the SSSC is currently dealing with legacy qualifications and allowing existing experienced managers/leaders to register on the basis of the qualifications that were relevant when appointed.

Table 15

**Scotland: Children’s and Young People’s Services Lead Practitioner/Manager (Standard in Childhood Practice)**

<p><b>Title: Children’s and Young People’s Services Lead Practitioner/Manager</b>  <b>Profile:</b> Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>
<p><b>Minimum entry requirements</b>  Flexible depending on previous experience and qualifications and chosen route.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Universities normally require 12 years of education and Scottish Higher/Advanced Higher Diplomas (SCQF 6/7; level 4 or 5 EQF) to include English and Maths</li> <li>2. National agreements allow for Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (e.g. SVQ 4/HNC/HND – Higher National Certificate/Diploma) in relation to Childhood Practice degree programmes.</li> <li>3. SVQ 4 or equivalent vocational qualification (EQF level 5)</li> <li>4. Undergraduate Degree (EQF/ISCED level 6)</li> </ol> <p><b>Professional studies:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 4-year full-time undergraduate degree leading to named award with eligibility for graduate registration</li> <li>2. SVQ 4 (or equivalent) followed by 2–3 years full-/part-time undergraduate degree leading to named award with eligibility for graduate registration</li> <li>3. SVQ 4 followed by 3 to 4 years of part-time study while continuing in employment, with eligibility for graduate registration</li> <li>4. Degree followed by graduate training programme in childhood practice</li> </ol> <p><b>Awards:</b></p>

<p><b>Title: <i>Children’s and Young People’s Services Lead Practitioner/Manager</i></b>  <b>Profile: Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional</b></p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. BA Hons Childhood Practice</li> <li>2. B BA Hons Childhood Practice</li> <li>3. SCQF Level 9 Childhood Practice</li> <li>4. Graduate Diploma Programme in Childhood Practice</li> </ol> <p><b>ECTS credits:</b> 180 or more, depending on chosen route.  <b>EQF level:</b> depends on route. BA Hons EQF level 6; BA Ordinary and SCQF Level 9 are EQF level 6  <b>ISCED 2011:</b> depends on route: 1, 2 and 3 are ISCED 550/650. Entry requirement for 4 is 650  <b>Main ECEC workplaces:</b> General/Day Care Manager in children’s centre or private and voluntary day nurseries (2–4 or 0–4 years); Leader/Manager in LA partnership pre-schools, voluntary and community playgroups and day nurseries (2–4 years); Leader/Manager in out-of-school and holiday provision (5–12 years)</p>

Table 16

**Scotland: Children’s and Young People’s Services Practitioner**

<p><b>Title: <i>Children’s and Young People’s Services Practitioner</i></b></p>
<p><b>Minimum entry requirements: For SVQ 3:</b> None specified – at the discretion of local SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) approved centre (primarily a work-based qualification for existing employees)</p> <p><b>For Higher National Certificate (HNC):</b> None specified – at the discretion of local SQA approved centre. Intermediate and higher certificates advised.</p> <p><b>Professional studies:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Scottish Vocational Qualification 3 in Children and Young People’s Services</li> <li>2. Higher National Certificate in Children and Young People’s Services or similar*</li> </ol> <p><b>Award:</b> depends on the route chosen.  <b>ECTS credits:</b> n/a  <b>EQF level:</b> 4 or 5  <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 4 or 5, depending on route chosen  <b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> LA, Partnership and Private Day Nurseries (0–4); Private, voluntary and community/partnership pre-schools and playgroups (2–4); Out-of-school clubs (before and after school and holidays; 5–12)</p>

**Notes:**

\*Precise name may vary depending on training provider and choice of options. HNCs are predominantly provided by Further and Higher Education Colleges for students continuing in full time education and training but with a significant component of work placements.

As in England and Wales, there are no minimum qualifications for Teaching Assistants or Special Needs Assistants in maintained nursery/primary schools in Scotland, though they may hold or achieve a variety of qualifications not detailed here.

**4.2.4 Northern Ireland: Initial ECEC qualifying routes (non-QTS)**

The person in charge/manager and deputy should have at least a qualification at QCF Level 5 Diploma in Child Care, Play, Learning and Development or Playwork; or a relevant occupational qualification in early years’ education, social work, nursing, teaching or health visiting; and 2 years’ experience working with children aged 0–4 years.

Team leaders or supervisors should have at least a qualification at QCF Level 3 Diploma in Child Care, Play, Learning and Development or Playwork.

At least 50% of all other childcare staff should have a minimum qualification at QCF Level 2 Diploma in Child Care, Play, Learning and Development or Playwork. Other staff should be in the



process of gaining this qualification within a reasonable time. Where staff have previously attained Level 2, 3 or 5 NVQ qualifications in Early Years Care and Education, this will be an acceptable alternative to QCF Diplomas.

Table 17

**Northern Ireland: ECEC Manager**

<b>Title: <i>Leadership Full Day Care, Crèche and Sessional Care</i></b> <b>Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</b>
<p><b>Entry requirements:</b> Level 5 = minimum acceptable qualification*</p> <p><b>Professional studies:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Full time education and training routes in Higher Education Colleges</li> <li>2. Part-time work-based routes</li> </ol> <p><b>Awards:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. BA Hons. Degree in Early Childhood Studies</li> <li>2. Playwork Degree</li> <li>3. Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development – Management Pathway</li> <li>4. Level 5 Diploma in Playwork</li> <li>5. Professional Qualification in: Social Work, Nursing, Midwifery, Health Visiting, Teaching and at least two years’ paid experience in employment working with children of the age group relevant to the setting they will be working in.</li> </ol> <p><b>ECTS credits:</b> not applicable  <b>EQF level:</b> 5  <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 655</p> <p><b>Main ECEC workplaces:</b> day nursery (0–3 years); pre-school/playgroup (2–3 years), children’s centre (0–4 years)</p>

\*Based on Acceptable Qualifications for the Early Years, School Age Childcare Childminding Sectors and Home Childcarers in Northern Ireland (2016, updated 2020)

Table 18

**Northern Ireland: Room Supervisor**

<b>Title: <i>Room Supervisor Full Day Care, Crèche and Sessional Care</i></b> <b>Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</b>
<p><b>Entry requirements:</b> Level 3 = minimum acceptable qualification</p> <p><b>Professional studies:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Full-time education and training routes mainly in regional colleges</li> <li>2. Part-time work-based routes</li> </ol> <p><b>Awards**:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Level 3 Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development</li> <li>2. Level 3 Diploma in Playwork</li> <li>3. CACHE Extended Diploma in Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development</li> <li>4. BTEC National Diploma in Children’s Care Learning, Play and Development</li> </ol> <p><b>ECTS credits:</b> not applicable  <b>EQF level:</b> 5  <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 655</p> <p><b>Main ECEC workplaces:</b> day nursery (0–3 years); Pre-school/playgroup (2–3 years); children’s centre (0–4 years)</p>

\*Based on Acceptable Qualifications for the Early Years, School Age Childcare, Childminding Sectors and Home Childcarers in Northern Ireland (2016, updated 2020)

\*\* Some qualifications require extra modules to be undertaken.



## 4.3 Competences, curricula and pedagogic-didactic approaches in IPE programmes

### 4.3.1 UK wide: Competence specifications and curricula

It has become clear from the above that a variety of approaches to qualifications for work with young children has evolved across the UK, dependent largely on the different governance and inspection regimes. The competency and curriculum requirements in turn reflect those differences. One aspect that is a common thread running through education and training programmes at all levels across the UK is a requirement to incorporate the core or generic skills essential for employment. These include amongst others: communication; application of number; use of information technology; problem solving; working with others/teamwork; managing own learning/ learning to learn.

The profile and level of core skills required for any particular job/subject area, and whether these are identified separately or embedded in other aspects, varies across the IPE programmes.

Competence specifications are based on national standards and curriculum frameworks. These not only differ between the nations (strongly educational in England, based on generic social care models in Wales and Scotland), but determine core professional requirements at different levels: currently at level 4 EQF and level 4 ISCED in England and at level 5 EQF/level 4 ISCED and level 6 EQF/level 5 ISCED in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (see *Appendix II* for explanatory note on UK Qualification Levels).

#### *QTS competence specifications and curricula*

Initial Teacher Training with QTS is delivered in three main educational phases: primary 3–11; middle 7–14 and secondary 11–19. Within the primary phase, some providers offer the opportunity to focus on lower primary/early years 3–7 (nursery, reception and Key stage 1) or upper primary (7–11). However, all ITT trainees are required to have a working knowledge of the key stages above and below in order to facilitate progression and to understand how key stages build on one another throughout the school curriculum to 19. Once qualified, a teacher with QTS may be deployed with any age range in the school system at the discretion of the Head Teacher.

Although ITT is similar in nature and its outcomes mutually recognised across the UK, the competency requirements for Teachers with QTS have developed in divergent ways to reflect the educational and cultural context of each nation. For ease of comparison, and to reduce repetition, the relevant information for qualified teachers with QTS across the four nations will be presented before other types of qualification are considered.

The curriculum is not separately prescribed outside the competency specification but is devised locally by each approved provider of Initial Teacher Training to ensure the underpinning knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to enable trainees to meet all aspects of the Teacher Standards.

A variety of pedagogic methods may be used in ITT depending on the approved local ITT provider (generally a Higher Education Institution (HEI) or school consortium linked to an HE provider) and chosen route. These may range from lectures and seminars to practical workshops and laboratory classes, demonstrations, teaching observations and work-based learning. Increasingly, ITT includes elements of distance learning and/or self-directed enquiry and problem solving. All ITT courses must include a minimum of around 50% placements/work-based learning as specified by the regulator.

An essential pedagogic/didactic feature of QTS (and also of EYTS) is building the capacity for

reflection and self-awareness in order to learn from experience. The ideal of the reflective and reflexive practitioner is one who constantly reviews what they have done and the impact it has had on themselves and others (both children and adults) within a cycle of continuous improvement. This is closely related to the highest level of the key/core skill of 'learning to learn'.

### ***Early Years Initial Teacher Training (EYITT, non-QTS) competence specifications and curricula***

As with QTS, the curriculum is devised by local approved providers of Initial Teacher Training to provide the underpinning knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to support these detailed competence specifications. The core of the curriculum is based around children's development, learning, health and wellbeing in the context of family, culture and services (the ecological context), the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements and the teaching of early literacy and numeracy. The supporting advice issued by the Department for Education provides the same list of core content as for Qualified Teacher Status; however, the emphasis on ecological context expressed in wider documentation related to EYTS is distinctive, as is Standard 7 on safeguarding and promoting welfare. Early Years Teachers with EYTS specialise in the Early Years Foundation Stage from 0 to 5 covering babies and toddlers as well as pre-primary education and care and are required to have a working knowledge of primary school Key Stage 1, the phase above, in order to facilitate progression. They must also understand how the other key stages build on one another throughout the National Curriculum up to the age of 18.

### ***General competence specifications and curricula (non-QTS)***

The main focus of the curriculum is a holistic approach to young children's health, development and learning from birth to 5 (7 in Wales) and how best to support this. The principles and values of child-centred practice are introduced along with opportunities to implement principles, theories and approaches in practice.

A variety of pedagogic methods may be used across all forms of qualification for work in education and children's services, depending on level, curriculum focus and chosen route. These may range from lectures and seminars to practical workshops and laboratory classes, demonstrations, teaching/childcare observations, modelling, coaching and work-based learning. Increasingly, all training includes elements of distance learning and/or self-directed enquiry and problem solving and in addition all learners are encouraged to be reflective and reflexive in relation to their learning experiences and to be able to self-evaluate their strengths, weaknesses and ongoing learning and development needs. All of the programmes must include a substantial component of placements/work-based learning and assessment as specified by the relevant awarding body or regulator. For example, the Level 3 Diploma in Care, Learning and Development requires a minimum 700 hours of experience in real work settings as an employee or on placement, i.e. around 50% of all learning hours. Assessment methods include, for example: observation, reflective accounts, critical incident analyses, self and peer assessment, portfolios, learning contracts, case studies, projects and simulations/virtual environments as well as critical analysis of information and evidence from reading or lectures, particularly at higher levels. However, the larger part of assessment must be based on the trainee's experience and performance in work/placement settings.

### 4.3.2 England: Competence specifications for Teachers with QTS

Table 19

England: Competence Specifications for Primary (Early Years) Teachers (3–7) with QTS

Teachers' Standards
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge pupils</li> <li>2. Promote good progress and outcomes by pupils</li> <li>3. Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge: (if teaching early reading) demonstrate a clear understanding of systematic synthetic phonics*; (if teaching early mathematics) demonstrate a clear understanding of appropriate teaching strategies*</li> <li>4. Plan and teach well-structured lessons</li> <li>5. Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all children</li> <li>6. Make accurate and productive use of assessment</li> <li>7. Manage behaviour effectively to ensure good and safe learning</li> <li>8. Fulfil wider professional responsibilities</li> </ol>

**Notes:** Standards and detailed criteria are generic to all teachers regardless of the age range. The two criteria with an asterisk are specific to teachers following an early years specialism (3–7). For a full list of Teachers' Standards and criteria see [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1040274/Teachers\\_\\_Standards\\_Dec\\_2021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1040274/Teachers__Standards_Dec_2021.pdf)

Source: Department for Education 2021c

Table 20

England: Competency Framework –Teachers' Standards (Early Years) – non-QTS

Standards	Criteria
	An Early Years Teacher must be able to:
Set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge all children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Establish and sustain a safe and stimulating environment where children feel confident and are able to learn and develop</li> <li>– Set goals that stretch and challenge children of all backgrounds, abilities and dispositions</li> <li>– Demonstrate and model the positive values, attitudes and behaviours expected of children.</li> </ul>
Promote good progress and outcomes by children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Be accountable for children's progress, attainment and outcomes</li> <li>– Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how babies and children learn and develop</li> <li>– Know and understand attachment theories, their significance and how to promote secure attachments effectively</li> <li>– Lead and model effective strategies to develop and extend children's learning and thinking, including sustained shared thinking</li> <li>– Communicate effectively with children from birth to age five, listening and responding sensitively</li> <li>– Develop children's confidence, social and communication skills through group learning</li> <li>– Understand the important influence of parents and/or carers, working in partnership with them to support the child's wellbeing, learning and development.</li> </ul>
Demonstrate good knowledge of early learning and EYFS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Have a secure knowledge of early childhood development and how that leads to successful learning and development at school</li> <li>– Demonstrate a clear understanding of how to widen children's experience and raise their expectations</li> <li>– Demonstrate a critical understanding of the EYFS areas of learning and development and engage with the educational continuum of expectations, curricula and teaching of Key Stage 1 and 2</li> <li>– Demonstrate a clear understanding of systematic synthetic phonics in the teaching of early reading</li> <li>– Demonstrate a clear understanding of appropriate strategies in the teaching of early mathematics.</li> </ul>

Standards	Criteria An Early Years Teacher must be able to:
Plan education and care taking account of the needs of all children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Observe and assess children’s development and learning, using this to plan next steps</li> <li>– Plan balanced and flexible activities and educational programmes that take into account the stage of development, circumstances and interests of children</li> <li>– Promote a love of learning and stimulate children’s intellectual curiosity in partnership with parents and/or carers</li> <li>– Use a variety of teaching approaches to lead group activities appropriate to the age range and ability of children</li> <li>– Reflect on the effectiveness of teaching activities and educational programmes to support the continuous improvement of provision</li> </ul>
Adapt education and care to respond to the strengths and needs of all children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Have a secure understanding of how a range of factors can inhibit children’s learning and development and how best to address these</li> <li>– Demonstrate an awareness of the physical, emotional, social, intellectual development and communication needs of babies and children, and know how to adapt education and care to support children at different stages of development</li> <li>– Demonstrate a clear understanding of the needs of all children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, and be able to use and evaluate distinctive approaches to engage and support them</li> <li>– Support children through a range of transitions</li> <li>– Know when a child is in need of additional support and how this can be accessed, working in partnership with parents and/or carers and other professionals.</li> </ul>
Make accurate and productive use of assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Know and act upon the legal requirements and guidance on health and safety, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child</li> <li>– Establish and sustain a safe environment and employ practices that promote children’s health and safety</li> <li>– Know and understand child protection policies and procedures, recognise when a child is in danger or at risk of abuse, and know how to act to protect them.</li> </ul>
Fulfil wider professional responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice</li> <li>– Make a positive contribution to the wider life and ethos of the setting</li> <li>– Take a lead in establishing a culture of cooperative working between colleagues, parents and/or carers and other professionals</li> <li>– Model and implement effective education and care, and support and lead other practitioners including Early Years Educators.</li> <li>– Take responsibility for leading practice through appropriate professional development for self and colleagues</li> <li>– Reflect on and evaluate the effectiveness of provision, and shape and support good practice</li> <li>– Understand the importance of and contribute to multi-agency team working.</li> </ul>

Source: Department for Education 2013

### 4.3.3 Wales: Competence specifications for teachers with QTS

New professional standards for teaching and leadership were introduced in Wales in 2017 and are the responsibility of the Education Workforce Council (EWC). There are five standards and five overarching values and dispositions. The standards form the framework for initial and ongoing professional development. Each standard is divided into a number of purposes and there are three descriptors for each of the teaching standards depending on whether in training, in the induction period or an experienced teacher:

- QTS
- Induction
- Sustained highly effective practice

There are two descriptors for the formal leadership standards:

- Sustained highly effective practice
- Effective formal leadership

Table 21

**Wales: Competence specifications: Teachers/Teaching Assistants/Higher Level Teaching Assistants**

<b>Professional values and dispositions</b>	
Welsh language and culture Rights to learn Literacy, numeracy and digital competency The professional learner The system role Professional entitlement	
<b>Five Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership</b>	
Pedagogy	The teacher consistently secures the best outcomes for learners through progressively refining teaching, influencing learners and advancing learning. The teacher in a formal leadership role exercises accountability for the pedagogy of others by creating and sustaining the conditions to realise the four purposes for learners and achieve the best for them in terms of standards, wellbeing and progress
Leadership	The teacher exercises leadership through all aspects of professional practice to support the efforts of others across the school and beyond to fulfil the educational ambitions for Wales. The teacher in a formal leadership role works intelligently to bring coherence, clarity and a shared commitment to realising the vision for pedagogy, learners, colleagues and the wider community.
Professional Learning	The teacher consistently extends knowledge, skills and understanding and can show how reflection and openness to challenge and support informs professional learning to progressively develop pedagogy. The teacher in a formal leadership role stimulates an appetite for professional learning that is valued, has impact upon pedagogy and supports professional growth across a learning community within and beyond the school.
Innovation	The teacher employs an innovative outlook which is exemplified through the controlled and measured development of techniques and approaches to improve pedagogic outcomes. The teacher in a formal leadership role ensures a positive climate for innovation that is coherent and manageable and outcomes are evaluated, disseminated and applied.
Collaboration	The teacher takes opportunities to work productively with all partners in learning in order to extend professional effectiveness. The teacher in a formal leadership role builds a climate of mutual support in which effective collaboration flourishes within and beyond the school to spread effective pedagogy.

**Note:** These standards have been abbreviated

Source: <https://hwb.gov.wales/professional-development/professional-standards>

#### 4.3.4 Scotland: Competence specifications for teachers with QTS

In Scotland, professional standards for qualified teachers are regulated through the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) and were revised in 2021. There are four standards: (1)



Provisional Registration; (2) Full Registration; (3) Career-Long Professional Learning; (4) Headship. They are underpinned by a set of professional values: (1) Social Justice; (2) Trust and Respect; (3) Integrity.

The following table lists the standard for provisional and full registration with the GTCS applied at the end of the ITT programme and on successful completion of the probationary year respectively. The level of performance expected is differentiated through use of differential criteria at the two stages. Further details can be found in the relevant documentation (see *References* and *Acronyms*).

Table 22

**Scotland: Competence specifications for Primary Teachers with QTS**

<b>1. Professional values and personal commitment</b>	
<p><b>Social Justice</b> Social justice is the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities now and in the future.</p> <p><b>Trust and Respect</b> Trust and respect are expectations of positive actions that support authentic relationship building and show care for the needs and feelings of the people involved and respect for our natural world and its limited resources.</p> <p><b>Integrity</b> Integrity is the practice of being honest and showing a consistent and uncompromising adherence to strong moral and ethical principles and values</p> <p><b>Professional Commitment</b> Making a professional commitment to learning and learners that is compatible with the aspiration of achieving a sustainable and equitable world embodies what it is to be a teacher in Scotland.</p>	
<b>2. Professional knowledge and understanding</b>	
Curriculum and Pedagogy	Have knowledge and understanding of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Pedagogical Theories and Professional Practice</li> <li>– Research and engagement in practitioner enquiry</li> <li>– Curriculum design</li> <li>– Planning for assessment, teaching and learning</li> </ul>
Professional Responsibilities	Have knowledge and understanding of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Education system</li> <li>– Learning communities</li> </ul>
<b>3. Professional Skills and Abilities</b>	
Curriculum and Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Plan effectively to meet learners needs</li> <li>– Utilise pedagogical approaches and resources</li> <li>– Utilise partnerships for learning and wellbeing</li> <li>– Employ assessment, evaluate progress, recording and reporting as an integral part of the teaching process to support and enhance learning</li> </ul>
The Learning Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Appropriately organise and manage learning</li> <li>– Engage learner participation</li> <li>– Build positive, rights respecting relationships for learning</li> </ul>
Professional Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Engage critically with literature, research and policy</li> <li>– Engage in reflective practice to develop and advance career-long professional learning and expertise</li> </ul>

**Please note** – these standards have been abbreviated.

Source: General Teaching Council for Scotland 2022

### 4.3.5 Northern Ireland: Competence specifications for teachers with QTS

The competence specifications for Pre-primary/Primary Teachers set down by the GTCNI (General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland), are presented in *Table 23* in a somewhat abbreviated form. For the exact wording, please see Department of Education (Northern Ireland)/General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland 2010.

Table 23

**Northern Ireland: Competence specifications for Pre-Primary Teachers (3-4) and Primary Teachers (4-11) with QTS**

General Teaching Council (NI) – Code of Values and Professional Practice	
<b>Professional Values and commitments</b>	<p>Teachers should demonstrate that they understand and uphold the core values and commitments enshrined in the Council’s Code of Values and Professional Practice.</p> <p>The core values of the profession are:  <b>Trust, honesty, respect, fairness, integrity, tolerance, commitment, equality and service</b></p> <p>Commitments are to:-</p> <p><b>Learners</b> e.g. to maintain professional relationships that respect pupils as persons; respect each pupils’ uniqueness, individuality and specific needs; motivate and inspire to help realize potential</p> <p><b>Colleagues and others</b> e.g. work with others to create a professional community; promote collegiality; cooperate with external agencies; ensure respectful, trusting relationships with parents/carers; respect confidentiality unless legal requirement to disclose</p> <p><b>The Profession</b> e.g. as reflective practitioners, contribute to review of policies and practices; assume responsibility for own ongoing professional development need</p>
<b>Professional knowledge and understanding: educational policies and contexts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Teachers will have developed knowledge and understanding of:</li> <li>– Contemporary debates about the nature and purposes of education and the social and policy contexts in which the aims of education are defined</li> <li>– Significant features of pupils’ cultures, languages and faiths and how to address the implications for learning arising from these</li> <li>– Their responsibilities under the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice, the most common special needs and strategies to address these</li> <li>– Strategies for communicating effectively with pupils, parents, colleagues and personnel from relevant child and school support agencies</li> <li>– How to use technology effectively, both to aid pupil learning and to support their professional role</li> <li>– The interrelationship between schools and the communities they serve, and potential for mutual development and wellbeing</li> <li>– The statutory framework pertaining to education and schooling and their specific responsibilities emanating from it</li> </ul>
<b>Professional knowledge and understanding: curriculum</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Teachers will have developed a knowledge and understanding of:</li> <li>– Curriculum development processes, including planning, implementation and evaluation</li> <li>– How the learning area/subject(s) they teach contribute to the Northern Ireland Curriculum*</li> <li>– The curriculum requirements in preceding and subsequent key stages</li> </ul>
<b>Professional knowledge and understanding: methods</b>	<p>Teachers will have developed knowledge and understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Relevant learning area/subject(s), including strategies and initiatives to improve, literacy, numeracy and thinking skills</li> <li>– Sufficient linguistic and pedagogical expertise to teach the curriculum in Irish medium and other bilingual contexts</li> </ul>

General Teaching Council (NI) – Code of Values and Professional Practice	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Factors that promote and hinder effective learning and the need to provide for the holistic development of the child</li> <li>– A range of strategies to promote and maintain positive behaviour, including an acknowledgement of pupil voice</li> </ul>
<b>Professional skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Set learning objectives taking account of what pupils know, understand and can do, and the Northern Ireland Curriculum requirements</li> <li>– Plan and evaluate lessons that enable all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to meet learning objectives</li> <li>– Deploy, organise and guide the work of other adults to support pupils' learning</li> <li>– Plan for out-of-school learning, including school visits and field work</li> <li>– Manage their time and workload effectively and efficiently and maintain a work/life balance</li> <li>– Create and maintain a safe, interactive and challenging learning environment</li> <li>– Use a range of strategies and resources, including eLearning, to enable learning and maintain pace within lessons</li> <li>– Employ strategies that motivate and meet the needs of all pupils, including those with special and additional educational and language needs</li> <li>– Promote a standard of behaviour that enables all pupils to learn, pre-empting and dealing with inappropriate behaviour</li> </ul>
<b>Professional skills: assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Monitor pupils' progress and give constructive feedback to help pupils reflect on and improve their learning</li> <li>– Select from a range of assessment strategies to evaluate pupils' learning, and use this information in their planning</li> <li>– Assess pupils' attainment against relevant benchmarking data and understand the relationship between assessment and target setting</li> </ul>
<b>Wider professional role</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Keep curricular, subject and pedagogical knowledge up-to-date through reflection, self-study and collaboration with colleagues</li> <li>– Contribute to the life of the school, collaborating with teaching and support staff, parents and external agencies</li> <li>– Liaise with parents or carers on their child's progress and achievements</li> </ul>

Source: Department of Education (Northern Ireland)/General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland 2010.

## 4.4 ECEC competence specifications and IPE curricula (PVI sector)

### 4.4.1 England

A range of qualifications from RQF Levels 3–6 are provided in Higher and Further Education institutions and by training providers. However, to be counted in the staff to child ratios, a qualification is needed that is 'full and relevant' at Levels 2 or 3 (DfE 2022a). Setting managers must have a level 3 qualification (Early Years Educator or equivalent). Degrees in Early Childhood Studies or a related degree with assessed placements or with the Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competences embedded in them can be counted in staff to child ratios at level 3. *Tables 24 and 25* show the six main qualification areas for the Level 3 Early Years Educator (see DfE 2019 for fuller details of the qualification criteria) and the nine competence areas for the Level 6 Early Childhood graduates (see QAA 2022 for fuller details).

Table 24

**England: Early Years Educator Level 3 – Main Qualification Criteria**

1.	Support and promote children’s early education and development
2.	Plan and provide effective care, teaching and learning that enables children to progress and prepares them for school
3.	Make accurate and productive use of assessment
4.	Develop effective and informed practice
5.	Safeguard and promote the health, safety and welfare of children
6.	Work in partnership with the key person, colleagues, parents and/or carers or other professionals

Source: DfE 2019

Table 25

**England: Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Level 6 – Competence areas**

1.	Advocating for young children’s rights and participation
2.	Promoting holistic child development
3.	Working directly with young children, families and colleagues to promote health, wellbeing, safety and nurturing care
4.	Observe, listen and plan for young children to support their wellbeing, early learning, progression and transitions
5.	Safeguarding and child protection
6.	Inclusive practice
7.	Partnership with parents and caregivers
8.	Collaborating with others
9.	Professional development

Source: Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) 2022

**4.4.2 Wales: Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development: Level 5 and Level 3 competence specifications**

Changes in Wales mean that the required qualification for leadership/management in Flying Start programmes – provision that is targeted at the most disadvantaged children and families – is higher (at level 5) than that for leading/managing day nurseries, play groups and other settings (where it remains at core pedagogue level 3) in less disadvantaged neighbourhoods. However, the volume of credit is not equivalent to that of a Diploma in Higher Education or a Foundation Degree in the Qualifications Wales Framework and therefore does not fulfil all the requirements for level 5. Several Higher Education providers in Wales have developed Early Years degree programmes which have embedded a practice competence element (Early Years Practitioner Status) aligning to the National Occupational Standards. These programmes have been approved by Social Care Wales and appear on their list of approved qualifications to work in the ECEC sector. These are an alternative route to a practice competence qualification to work in ECEC to those listed below.



Table 26a

**Wales: Minimum competence specifications for Leader/Manager in Flying Start Children’s Centre programme – level 4**

<p><b>Title: Level 4 Diploma – Preparing for Leadership and Management in Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development (Wales)</b>  <b>Age range:</b> 0–19  <b>Level 4</b> in <i>Qualifications for Wales and Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF)</i>: 60 credits equivalent to 335 learning hours and a Total Qualification Time of 600 hours.  <b>Structure:</b> 3 Mandatory units.</p>
<p><b>Entry requirements:</b>  None other than minimum age 18 years. Rest at discretion of local approved centre.</p>
<p><b>Consists of three modules, all mandatory</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leading child-centred practice</li> <li>2. Theoretical frameworks for leadership and management</li> <li>3. Understanding how to lead and manage effective team performance</li> </ol>

Table 26b

**Wales: Minimum competence specifications for Leader/Manager in Flying Start Children’s Centre programme – level 5**

<p><b>Title: Level 5 Diploma – Leadership and Management in Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development: Practice</b>  <b>Level 5</b> in <i>Qualifications for Wales and Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF)</i>: Minimum 120 credits (equivalent to 415 learning hours and a Total Qualification Time of 1,200 hours including practice competence)  <b>Structure:</b> Minimum of 90 credits from mandatory core, 30 credits from optional group</p>	
<p><b>Entry requirements:</b>  Must be over 19. Others at discretion of local approved centre.  In Wales, Level 4 <i>Preparing for Leadership and Management in Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development (Wales)</i> must be completed prior to the Level 5 Diploma in <i>Leadership and Management in Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development (Wales)</i></p>	
<p><b>Mandatory core units</b></p>	<p><b>In a health and social care or children and young people’s setting lead and manage:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Child-centred practice</li> <li>– Effective team performance</li> <li>– Quality of the workplace/setting</li> <li>– Professional practice</li> <li>– Practice that promotes the safeguarding of children</li> </ul>
<p><b>Optional units</b></p>	<p><b>In a health and social care or children and young people’s setting lead and manage:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Health, wellbeing and creative learning within childcare provision</li> <li>– The acquisition of a new language through immersion</li> <li>– Support for families to develop parenting skills</li> <li>– Speech, language and communication skills</li> <li>– Services for children with additional needs</li> <li>– Continuous improvement through the regulatory processes</li> <li>– Inter-professional working arrangements</li> <li>– Work with volunteers</li> <li>– Business planning and processes</li> <li>– A therapy team</li> <li>– Child health services</li> <li>– Study skills</li> </ul>

*Explanatory notes:* Not all units are of equal size/credit value.

*Source:* Health and Care Learning Wales 2019

Although individuals with a wide range of qualifications may work in provision that includes young children under 12 in Wales and Northern Ireland, such as out-of-school and holiday play schemes, these are not recognised as core professionals in the ECEC sector and the alternative qualifications are not detailed here.

Table 27

**Wales: Minimum competency requirements for core practitioner/senior practitioner/setting manager**

<p><b>Title: Level 3 Diploma in Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development)</b>  <b>Age range: 0–19</b>  <b>Level 3 in Qualifications for Wales and Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF):</b>          65 credits equivalent to one year of full-time study plus placement experience  <b>Structure: 16 mandatory units plus minimum of 16 credits from 5-6 optional units</b></p>	
<p><b>Entry requirements:</b>          None other than minimum age 16 years. Rest at discretion of local approved centre.</p>	
<p><b>Mandatory units</b></p>	
<p><b>Generic health and social care</b></p>	<p><b>In settings for health and social care for children and young people</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Promote communication</li> <li>– Engage in personal development</li> <li>– Promote equality and inclusion</li> <li>– Principles for implementing duty of care*</li> </ul>
<p><b>Children and young people</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Understand child and young person development*</li> <li>– Promote child and young person development</li> <li>– Understand how to safeguard the wellbeing of children and young people*</li> <li>– Support children’s and young people’s health and safety</li> <li>– Develop positive relationships with children, young people and others involved in their care</li> <li>– Working together for the benefit of children and young people</li> <li>– Understand how to support positive outcomes for children and young people*</li> </ul>
<p><b>Early learning and childcare</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Context and principles for early years provision</li> <li>– Promote learning and development in the early years</li> <li>– Promote children’s welfare and wellbeing in the early years</li> <li>– Professional practice in early years settings</li> <li>– Support children’s speech, language and communication</li> </ul>
<p><b>Selected Optional Units</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Work with babies and young children to promote their development and learning</li> <li>– Care for the physical and nutritional needs of babies and young children</li> <li>– Lead and manage a community based early years setting</li> <li>– Promote young children’s physical activity and movement skills</li> <li>– Promote creativity and creative learning in young children</li> <li>– Work with parents to meet their children’s needs</li> <li>– Work with parents, families and carers to support their children’s speech, language and communication development</li> <li>– Engage fathers in their children’s early learning</li> <li>– Promote children in early years settings acquiring a new language through immersion</li> </ul>	

**Note:** Not all units are of equal credit value.

\*Units marked with an asterisk are knowledge only. All others must be demonstrated in practice.

Source: Health and Care Learning Wales 2019



## Curricular areas

The curricular areas for the level 3, 4 and 5 diplomas in Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development are determined by the need to underpin the competence requirements. However, as these qualifications are embedded within the wider Children and Young People’s Services Sector, the focus is much broader than education. A substantial mandatory core covers the development health and wellbeing of children from birth to 19 in the context of their families and social circumstances and is underpinned by a children’s rights approach.

### 4.4.3 Scotland: Competence specifications – Early Learning and Childcare

There are three sets of competences that must be met depending on the level of practice: Lead Practitioner/Manager in Childhood Practice (EQF level 6)<sup>5</sup>, Core Practitioner Level 7 SQCF (EQF level 5 (Table 28) and Early Education and Childcare (EQF level 4).

Table 28

#### Scotland: Children and Young People (0–16): Competence specifications for core practitioner

<b>Role: Core Practitioner Level 7 SQCF (EQF level 5)*</b> (Meets requirements for registration with Scottish Social Services Council) <b>Title: Scottish Vocational Qualification in Social Services (Children and Young People 0-16)</b>	
<b>Structure:</b> Based on National Occupational Standards (Skills for Care and Development) Four mandatory/core units plus four optional units <b>Minimum entry requirements:</b> None specified (at discretion of local SQA approved centre). Current employment in a relevant childcare provider expected.	
<b>Mandatory Units</b>	
<b>Promote effective communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Establish understanding about children’s communication</li> <li>– Support children to interact through communication</li> <li>– Communicate effectively about difficult, complex and sensitive issues with children and key people</li> <li>– Communicate using records and reports</li> </ul>
<b>Promote health, safety and security in the work setting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Maintain health, safety and security in the work setting</li> <li>– Promote health and safety in the work setting</li> <li>– Minimise risks arising from emergencies</li> </ul>
<b>Develop practice through reflection and learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Reflect on own practice</li> <li>– Take action to enhance practice</li> </ul>
<b>Promote the safeguarding of children and young people</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Maintain understanding and awareness of harm, abuse and safeguarding</li> <li>– Implement practices that help to safeguard children and young people from harm or abuse</li> <li>– Develop relationships that promote the safeguarding of children and young people</li> <li>– Promote rights and inclusion with children and young people</li> <li>– Work in ways that promote the wellbeing of children and young people</li> <li>– Support children and young people to keep themselves safe</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> The SSSC standard for Lead Practitioner/Manager also acts as the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement recognized by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in Scotland for BA degrees in Childhood Practice. The content of awards from universities is not prescribed but must cover the areas set out in the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in Scotland (see above).

- Optional units for work in early learning and childcare include:
- Promote the development of children and young people\*
- Plan and organise environments for children and families
- Promote the health and physical development of children
- Promote children's wellbeing and resilience
- Implement frameworks for early education through the development of curriculum planning
- Support early intervention for the benefit of children and families
- Care for children at home
- Promote the care, learning and development of children with additional requirements in partnership with their families
- Empower families through the development of parenting skills
- Use information and communication technology to promote children's early learning
- Support the use of medication for children
- Support children and young people through major transitions
- Support children who have experienced trauma
- Manage a small-scale childcare business
- Work with a management committee

Once registered with the SSC, all workers must follow the **Code of Practice** below.

Social service workers must:

- Protect the rights and promote the interests of service users and carers
- Strive to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of service users and carers
- Promote the independence of service users while protecting them as far as possible from danger or harm
- Respect the rights of service users whilst seeking to ensure that their behaviour does not harm themselves or other people
- Uphold public trust and confidence in social services
- Be accountable for the quality of their work and take responsibility for maintaining and improving their knowledge and skills.

**Please note:** These standards have been abbreviated.

Source: SQA- Scottish Qualification Authority 2021

\* The format of the **HNC Childhood Practice** (Higher National Certificate) is being revised with a pilot of so called NextGen HNC underway in 2021/22

#### ***IPE curricular areas and approaches – SVQ***

All those preparing for SVQs in the care sector cover the same core requirements, regardless of age band or setting. However, the rest of the curriculum depends on the chosen option modules that match the employment setting.

As SVQs are primarily designed for those already in relevant employment, the methods employed would be primarily through working under direction with modelling, observation and mentoring support from an experienced and qualified co-worker. This is normally supplemented by distance learning/self-study or day/block release to colleges for the underpinning knowledge, theory and methods.

#### **4.4.4 Northern Ireland**

Level 5 is now the minimum qualification for those working as the person in charge/manager/deputy leaders and room supervisors/team leaders who are able to deputise (Childcare Partnerships 2016).





Table 29

**Northern Ireland: Level 5 competence specifications**

<b>Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development Management Pathway*</b>	
Learners are required to successfully complete 90 overall credits, 72 credits from the mandatory units and a minimum of 18 credits from the optional units	
<b>Mandatory units</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Support children’s care, learning and development in the early years</li> <li>– Lead practice that supports positive outcomes for children’s development</li> <li>– Develop and implement policies and procedures to support safeguarding of children</li> <li>– Promote professional practice</li> <li>– Develop health and safety and risk management policies, procedures and practices in early years settings</li> <li>– Work in partnership</li> <li>– Use and develop systems that promote communication</li> <li>– Develop own professional development</li> <li>– Champion diversity, equality and inclusion</li> <li>– Lead and manage a team</li> <li>– Manage induction</li> <li>– Develop supervision practice</li> <li>– Appraise staff performance</li> <li>– Professional and sustainable practice in delivery of service</li> </ul>
<b>Optional units</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Understand the speech, language and communication needs of children and young people with social, emotional and mental health needs</li> <li>– Promote creativity and creative learning in young children, work with parents, families and carers to support their children and young people’s speech, language and communication development</li> <li>– Promote children in childcare settings acquiring a new language through immersion</li> <li>– Develop and evaluate operational plans for own area of responsibility</li> <li>– Recruitment and selection within health and social care or children and young people’s settings</li> <li>– Facilitate coaching and mentoring of practitioners in health and social care or children and young people’s settings</li> <li>– Manage quality in health and social care or children and young people’s setting</li> <li>– Develop provision for family support</li> </ul>

Source: NCFE 2022

## 4.5 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

### UK-wide

The majority of entrants make the choice of a career in ECEC at 16 to 18 years while still in full-time education and training. Of these some will go into work-based apprenticeship schemes while the majority stay on at school or college, gaining work experience through practice placements. Those who achieve better grades in the level 3 Diploma (SVQ 3 in Scotland), often combined with other accredited studies, may then apply for higher education in a relevant subject area or on an integrated professional education and training course.

Other entrants follow more traditional academic studies (GCSEs and ‘A’ Levels, or Scottish Highers) before choosing a career in primary teaching on leaving school (B.Ed./BA Education) or choosing to study/work with the 0–8 age group (e.g. BA Early Childhood Studies or BA Childhood Practice in Scotland).

Direct entrants into employment need to work towards becoming qualified within two or three years of appointment and in Scotland become registered to work in the sector. It is possible for



16 to 17 year-olds to opt to go straight into employment as unqualified staff or on apprenticeship schemes, and employers may provide in-house work-based training programmes beyond induction with a pathway starting from level 2 Certificates and Diplomas (or SVQs in Scotland) and building up to level 3 or higher supported by day release to a college or distance learning resources. Others enter the ECEC workforce as mature adults after having had their own children, or as a career change.

The UK education, higher education and training sectors have become much more diversified and flexible in recent years. For level 3 (EQF level 4) qualified core practitioners, progression to and through higher education is possible via work-based and distance routes. Further and higher education institutions offer the level 5 (EQF 5) Diploma in Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development or Higher National Certificates/Diplomas and Foundation Degrees (level 5) that in turn can be 'topped up' to a Bachelor's degree and full level 6 graduate status with an additional 12 to 18 months of work and study.

#### 4.5.1 Formal opportunities for moving up and across qualifications frameworks

**Horizontal mobility:** In Wales and Scotland, permeability across the non-school workforce is encouraged through a shared code of ethics and values in care and qualification structures that have a mandatory common core for children and young peoples' and wider care services. Transfer between roles is thus possible through the addition of a few specific units. In England there is less transferability into and within the education sector because of the strongly educational focus of qualifications and the strict division between teachers with QTS and support staff roles.

**Vertical mobility:** The extended version of the RQF level 3 Diploma in Children's Care Learning and Development in Wales and Northern Ireland, and the EYE qualification in England have been rated by the Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) in order to create the credits which are necessary for entry to Higher Education. However, vocationally oriented credits alone may not be sufficient in relation to the competitive requirements for entrance to some universities. Hence 16 to 19 year-olds in full-time education and training in schools and colleges are often advised to combine their vocational qualification with some additional academic studies. In the case of mature students with extensive practice experience, universities often exercise more discretion over entry requirements.

The relevant regulator controls the number of places for all forms of Initial Teacher Training in the nations of the UK and entry can be highly competitive. The range of full-time and part-time routes through ITT (leading to QTS) ensures that progression is possible by work-based routes. However, standard higher education fees (currently £9,250 per annum – €10.766<sup>6</sup>) are applicable for those requiring a degree. Although loans are available for first degrees, Higher Education Institution fees may still be prohibitive to many given the low pay characteristic of the sector.

#### 4.5.2 Options for career changers

The ITT graduate entry routes for QTS provide opportunities for career change for graduates. However, the requirement for Maths and English (and Science in England) is GCSE (level 2) at a minimum of grade B in England (grade C in Wales).

For those at RQF/SVQ level 3 with related qualifications in playwork, health care or social care, career change is facilitated through the mandatory common core structure for the care sector that applies in Wales and Scotland. In England, the distinctively educational approach of the EYE makes transferability more difficult. Alternatively, individuals may use any existing RQF level 3 qualifications to apply for an undergraduate degree as a mature student.

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<sup>6</sup> Conversion rate: July 2023



At any stage of the education and training system Accreditation of Prior Accredited or Experiential Learning (APL /APEL, sometimes referred to as RPL – Recognition of Prior Learning) is theoretically possible. However, it has proved extremely difficult to operationalise in practice as credit is usually transferred by matching learning outcomes to modules/units. What is commonly found is that the variation of content in modules and levels across different awarding bodies or Higher Education institutions makes an exact match impossible, meaning that it is easier for the individual to follow the whole programme rather than to try selectively to fill in apparent gaps. The exception to this is through recognition agreements with particular institutions or Awarding Bodies based on academic transcripts and mapping. These may allow, for example, an ITT collaborative provider to give the equivalent of 60 ECTS credits credit (first year of University, RQF level 4 studies) for a range of specified vocationally related qualifications.

## 5. Guided workplace experience (practicum) in the initial professional education of core professionals

Workplace-based learning is an essential component of all education and training programmes that lead to recognised qualifications for ECEC at EQF levels 4 to 6 across the UK. As all recognised qualifications for core practitioners and teachers are competence-based (interpreted as the effective implementation of skills and knowledge in action) rather than just knowledge-based, evidence for assessment must include demonstration of the competences claimed in an appropriate work environment. This is achieved through real work in the case of employees, or practice placements for trainees.

### 5.1 Regulation/guidance, duration and structure of work-based learning in IPE

The precise requirements for work-based learning are set down by the relevant awarding or regulating body and vary with sector, qualification and chosen route. In level 3 Diploma programmes placement/work experience must account for roughly half of the learning time and for those studying for the level 5 Diploma in Leadership in Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development this must include experience within a leadership role, albeit limited in extent.

ITT programmes must include a minimum of 24 weeks (120 days) of work experience, up to two weeks of which may be counted from before the main training programme begins. Experience of at least two different settings and ages/phases of the curriculum is also required.

### 5.2 ECTS credits allocation for IPE

Whether or not ECTS credits are allocated specifically to work-based learning within higher education programmes is dependent on the structure of the individual modules that make up the validated course specification which in turn depends on the policy of the Higher Education Institution. In some cases, designated placement modules carrying a given number of points are part of the course specification. In others, time spent in placement is integrated into the module specifications for different curricular/subject areas.

### 5.3 Skills and competences developed in IPE through work-based learning

In judging core/key skills, the UK system allows for the distinction between whether and where particular skills are taught, developed and assessed. In a fully competence-based qualification system, ideally all types and areas of skills and competences defined in the specification should



be developed through practice and assessed in the workplace, regardless of how they were originally taught. However, the methods of assessment may take many forms and simulation/alternative methods may be permitted under some circumstances (for example, in demonstrating aspects of competences associated with child abuse/protection or dealing with a difficult parent that might not occur in the course of everyday practice as a trainee).

Although teaching methods and techniques can be taught in the classroom and demonstrated through observation of video clips, it is widely recognised that their effective implementation in real group settings with children cannot be achieved without practice in a real-world setting. This is particularly true of managing children's behaviour and group/classroom management. Co-teaching or observation and coaching by an experienced practitioner are usually considered the most effective. However, pairing trainees to support each other is also used and can result in effective learning for both participants when combined with debriefing with an experienced teacher or tutor.

Similarly, learning to work with and supervise/mentor less well-qualified colleagues or to handle parents' concerns are skills that, although they may be simulated and rehearsed through role play, most students/trainees develop or hone through direct experience in the workplace at a later stage.

#### 5.4 Forms of student self-evaluation and external evaluation

Although the expected level of evaluation varies with the level of qualification, for all ECEC trainees judging competence is not just about observing that a task has been carried out meeting certain criteria but ascertaining the reasoning and theory underpinning a trainee's actions. It is hence generally recognised that sound underpinning knowledge and understanding is essential to enable trainees to respond effectively in the unpredictable situations that are characteristic of work in ECEC. In England and Scotland, vocationally oriented degrees for those working with young children (such as BA Hons Early Childhood Studies or BA in Childhood Practice respectively) already allow for a mix of academic/theoretical knowledge and practical/practice-based credit. In Wales the EU Social Fund initiative called '*Progress for Success*' (Welsh Government 2017b) is providing opportunities for practitioners to extend their knowledge and skills to improve provision for children

Assessment items within the overall assessment strategy may include:

- Essays and assignments and written or oral examinations are used to test knowledge and understanding of relevant theories and procedures outside of the workplace.
- Child observations, including those undertaken as part of routine workplace records, are used by tutors to test understanding of stages of development and the ability to apply this in deciding the next steps in promoting development for a particular child.
- Work-based projects and assignments require students to plan and implement activities in order to promote a particular aspect of children's development. These are normally designed to fit within the wider curriculum plans/schedules of the workplace.
- Reflective logs and diaries while in work/on placement are used to help students identify and cope with the emotional impact of incidents that may arise in ECEC as well as to improve on their own learning and performance.
- Building on the above, students may be asked formally to evaluate/rate their own performance as part of professional dialogue with and grading by supervisors/mentors or tutors.
- Case studies may be used to demonstrate analytic and problem solving skills that draw on underpinning theory and knowledge that has not been adequately tested through a period of work-based learning.
- Research activities may be used to develop the trainee's capacity to make use of evidence in support of teaching and commitment to continuous improvement.
- In some cases, unseen written examinations or multiple choice tests may be used to assess aspects of knowledge.

All of these methods and more may contribute to the portfolio of evidence that students/trainees/employees accumulate in relation to the skills and competencies specified.

Self-evaluation on a formative basis is a feature of many assessment strategies as it is considered to be an effective means of encouraging self-reflection and the development of reflective practice. To be valid, any evidence from the workplace must be substantiated through the signature of the supervisor/mentor assigned to the student or by a visiting tutor.

**In the case of ITT** (including Early Years Teacher Status in England), although appropriately qualified and trained supervisors/mentors validate the work-based evidence of trainees and undertake their own observations, their judgements must be moderated through joint observations carried out with a visiting tutor/representative of the ITT provider who may carry out their own separate observations in addition. Independent external evaluation is also a requirement for effective quality assurance. Specifically, External Moderators with no connection to the ITT provider must themselves carry out a number of sample observations of trainees to confirm the accuracy of judgements made jointly by the supervising teacher and the visiting tutor/representative of the ITT provider.

**For the level 3 diplomas** and apprenticeships (EQF 4), the majority of judgements are made by the staff of local ECEC centres in which trainees/employees are based and/or by visiting tutors from the school or Further Education institution that has overall responsibility for their training programme. The judgements made by individual assessors are quality assured by an internal moderator who reports, via approved assessment centre arrangements, to the independent External Moderator representing the relevant awarding body.

## 5.5 Qualifying courses for mentors/supervisors

Supervisors/mentors must themselves be qualified at a relevant level and undergo specific training for the role provided by the ITT provider or Approved Assessment Centre. The form and length of training is not usually prescribed and the outcome of training is rarely formally assessed. However, an annual training and update event for mentors is considered good practice and some training providers offer modules in mentoring that can be counted towards related awards or Continuing Professional Development requirements.

The effectiveness of supervisor/mentor training can be evaluated during the moderation process by considering the consistency of application of procedures and judgements made by supervisors/mentors. In the case of ITT, representatives of the approved ITT provider must undertake regular visits to moderate and to carry out direct observations themselves as part of quality assurance.

## 5.6 Designated roles, time allocations and remuneration of mentors/supervisors

Mentoring/supervising staff in ECEC centres usually have specified roles in relation to students/trainees/junior employees that notionally require some remittance of their time to perform. These arrangements are formalised in guidance to ITT providers in which supervisors/mentors sign an agreement and payments are made by the ITT provider to facilitate their release. However, whereas regular formal hours of release from teaching may be achieved in a school, the reality for most small-scale ECEC settings is that the manager/group leader (who is often the only person in the setting sufficiently well qualified to act as supervisor/mentor) simply has to fit supervision into their already busy schedule and this may take them away from direct work with children.



## 6. Continuing professional development (CPD) for ECEC staff

Throughout the UK, the only ECEC staff to have fully regulated CPD frameworks, prescribed CPD opportunities and standardised terms and conditions of service are Teachers with QTS in maintained schools. This is partly because teachers with QTS must all be registered with the relevant nation's organisation that sets down the standards for their training and continuing development and support needs, and partly because the teaching profession is well established and strongly unionised. This is not the case for other areas of the ECEC workforce.

In England, there is recognition of the importance of ongoing professional development in the early years sector and while there are no formal standards for CPD or registration of practitioners in England, the Government has made funds available under the COVID Recovery Plan (DfE 2022b) to provide whole setting support and mentoring for practitioners and coaching to leaders. They have also introduced the National Professional Qualification in Early Years Leadership (NPQEYL) (DfE 2022b). Furthermore, research by the Nuffield Foundation (Oppenheim, Rehill, and Batcheler 2022, 53) has highlighted the importance of “improving the system for accessing Continuing Professional Development through a central online hub for accessing quality-assured resources and courses as part of a single one-stop shop for career development in the sector.”

In other parts of the UK, Wales is moving towards registration of staff working in the sector (see *Chapter 7*) and in Scotland all staff working in settings registered by the Care Inspectorate must be registered or working towards registration with the SSSC. Staff are required to complete continuing professional learning – this is part of the codes of practice for social service workers. They are also required to confirm that they have recorded and completed the appropriate Continual Professional Learning (CPL) for their registration when they renew it. All registered support workers, practitioners and managers must complete 10 days or 60 hours CPL over 5 years. It is also the case that regulatory and inspection authorities in all four nations are increasingly developing online training and CPD opportunities and/or best practice guidance as well as providing information about approved training and CPD opportunities elsewhere.

In Scotland, the SSSC describe CPL in broad terms, from learning for a qualification to reading a book or mentoring a colleague. The agencies regulating the sector provide online training resources and directories of learning resources. The Government has also invested in five online learning modules published in 2020 to accompany the workforce expansion. However, it is difficult for the workforce to get protected time for CPD and there is some emerging evidence that enrolment on online learning courses such as the Government CPL and SSSC's open badges increased during COVID-19 lockdown, when some early years professionals were unable to work in settings as usual and had time to spend on learning.

A further issue raised about the nature of CPD provision is the contrast between one-day/hours-based training sessions that focus on skills and the general aim for a degree-led workforce where deeper professional reflection is embedded (Dunn et al. 2018).

In the school sector, government policies across the UK, to a greater or lesser extent, have been to devolve budgets and decision-making down to school level. In England, this has probably gone furthest in terms of so-called Free Schools and Academies, which are not strictly bound by the national curriculum and can make their own decisions on appropriate qualifications for staff and may not be bound by national pay agreements. But more generally, the traditional role of local authorities as providers of in-service training and curriculum updates has diminished and all schools now control their own training/CPD budgets and are free to buy into services from whatever source as they see fit.



Table 30 attempts to encompass England, Wales and Northern Ireland while Table 31 covers the same features for Scotland.

Table 30

England, Wales and Northern Ireland: Features of CPD by role/qualification type

Issue	Teacher in maintained nursery or primary school with QTS, level 6 EQF	Group/Flying Start Leader/Children's Centre manager with EYTS (RQF/EQF level 6 England); Diploma in leadership of CCPLD (EQF level 5 Wales)	Core practitioner RQF level 3 (EQF level 4) with EYE (England); CCPLD (Wales and Northern Ireland)
Regulatory frameworks for CPD	<p>Newly qualified/probationary teacher year on 90% workload for support and CPD plus 4/5 days to attend ongoing professional development with ITT provider.</p> <p>Specialist qualifications and/or standards for senior teachers and leadership and management.</p>	<p>DfE and SCW (<i>Social Care Wales</i>) advise but do not require days for CPD.</p> <p>Regulatory standards require all staff to keep up to date with basic requirements.</p>	<p>Regulatory standards require all staff to keep up to date with basic requirements.</p>
Main forms of CPD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– In-house whole school days</li> <li>– One-off training days and short courses</li> <li>– Longer modules and specialist or management awards</li> <li>– Postgraduate certificates and/or Master's Degrees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– One-off training days and short courses</li> <li>– Distance learning packages</li> </ul> <p><b>Minority:</b> management or postgraduate certificate/diploma or Master's modules for graduates Top-up from level 5 to Bachelor's Degree</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– One-off training days or short courses</li> <li>– Distance learning packages</li> </ul> <p><b>Minority:</b> Advanced certificate/Diploma awards or Foundation Degrees (mainly self-funded)</p>
Costs: who pays?	<p>Individual school budget (includes element for staff CPD)</p> <p>Some specialist courses funded/provided by central government or regulators</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Employers</li> <li>– Individuals</li> <li>– Occasional LA subsidy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Employers</li> <li>– Individuals</li> <li>– Occasional LA subsidy</li> <li>– Student loans for undergraduate degrees</li> </ul>
Leave and CPD entitlement	<p>Max. 190 teaching days per year (38 weeks) plus 5 non-teaching days</p>	<p>Statutory minimum leave entitlement 25 days</p>	<p>Statutory minimum leave entitlement 25 days</p>
Obligatory activities	<p>Participation in school planning or CPD on 5 non-teaching days</p>	<p>Mandatory training list for Flying Start</p>	<p>None specified</p>

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Teacher in maintained nursery or primary school with QTS, level 6 EQF</b>	<b>Group/Flying Start Leader/Children's Centre manager with EYTS (RQF/EQF level 6 England); Diploma in leadership of CCPLD (EQF level 5 Wales)</b>	<b>Core practitioner RQF level 3 (EQF level 4) with EYE (England); CCPLD (Wales and Northern Ireland)</b>
	Evidence of CPD required at annual appraisal and performance review	Managers and Practitioners (Wales)	
<b>Access problems</b>	Supply teacher costs for additional days set against limited school budgets – prioritisation	Small employers lack resources. Costs prohibitive to low paid individuals. Cover arrangements often problematic for key personnel	Time out of setting; lack of resources cover arrangements often problematic geography/distance  Costs prohibitive for low paid individuals
<b>Main providers of CPD</b>	Approved providers of ITT Higher Education Institutions Lead schools in network Local Authorities Government agencies Chartered College of Teaching	Further and higher education institutions Local Authorities Distance Learning packages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Employers</li> <li>– Membership organisations (e.g. for play-groups)</li> <li>– Further Education institutions</li> <li>– Local Authorities</li> </ul>
<b>Recognition/ advancement</b>	CPD often linked to specialist, lead teacher or management responsibilities with pay scale advancement or special responsibility allowances	None – up to individual employers	None – up to individual employers
<b>Special provision for Heads of ECEC</b>	For unit/phase management – optional senior teacher awards set down by regulator. For whole school management compulsory NPQH* (England and Wales)	None required beyond qualifications listed above	None required for pre-school group/day nursery managers
<b>Specialist modules</b>	Specialist teacher modules in range of curriculum subjects plus SEN, specified by relevant regulator	Optional specialist short course/modules may be available (e.g. SEN)	Optional specialist short courses/modules may be available (e.g. SEN,)

*Explanatory Notes:*

\* NPQH (National Professional Qualification for Headship) is the qualification for all head teachers or aspiring head teachers in England and Wales.



Table 31

## Scotland: Features of CPD by role/qualification type

Issue	Teacher QTS	Leader/Manager Childhood Practice	Core Childhood Practitioner
<b>Regulatory frameworks for CPD</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Standards set down by GTCS</li> <li>2. Career Professional Development</li> <li>3. Middle Management</li> <li>4. Headship</li> </ol>	Staff registered with SSSC are required to complete CPL – this is part of the codes of practice for social service workers. Staff are required to confirm that they have completed the appropriate CPL for their registration when they renew it.	Registered practitioners are required to complete CPL – this is part of the codes of practice for social service workers. Staff are required to confirm that they have completed the appropriate CPL for their registration when they renew it.
<b>Main forms of CPD</b>	<p>2 &amp; 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Guidance and resources from Education Scotland</li> <li>– LA training days and short courses</li> </ul> <p>4:</p> <p>Flexible route via LAs or Scottish Qualification for Headship via Universities</p>	<p>Guidance from SSSC describes CPL in broad terms from learning from qualifications to reading a book and mentoring a colleague.</p> <p>The agencies regulating the sector provide online training resources and directories of learning resources. The Scottish Government invested in five online learning modules published in 2020 to accompany the workforce expansion.</p>	<p>Guidance from SSSC describes CPL in broad terms from learning from qualifications to reading a book and mentoring a colleague. The agencies regulating the sector provide online training resources and directories of learning resources. The Scottish Government invested in five online learning modules published in 2020 to accompany the workforce expansion.</p>
<b>Leave and CPD entitlement</b>	<p>National agreement: 35 days per year leave rising to 40 after 5 years of service.</p> <p><b>CPD:</b> 5 required school planning/development days plus additional 5 obligatory CPD days.</p>	No obligatory CPD entitlement	No obligatory CPD entitlement.
<b>Obligatory activities</b>	None specific: linked to annual performance appraisal and review	<p>All registered leaders and managers must complete 10 days or 60 hours CPL over 5 years.</p> <p>Child protection training is required by local employers.</p> <p>The 'National Standard' requires staff to be kept up to date on child protection matters.</p>	<p>All registered support workers must complete 10 days or 60 hours CPL over 5 years.</p> <p>Child protection training is required by local employers.</p> <p>The 'National Standard' requires staff to be kept up to date on child protection matters.</p>

Issue	Teacher QTS	Leader/Manager Childhood Practice	Core Childhood Practitioner
<b>Costs: who pays?</b>	Local authorities via school budgets	This is decided by local employers. As part of the Early Learning and Childcare expansion many local authorities have funded initial professional education. Local employer may fund other training at their discretion.	This is decided by local employers. As part of the Early Learning and Childcare expansion many local authorities have funded initial professional education. Local employer may fund other training at their discretion.
<b>Access problems</b>	School priorities (budgets include CPD element and supply teacher cover)	Cover difficulties; Setting budget constraints; Individual low pay; HEI fees	Cover difficulties; Setting budget constraints; Individual low pay; HEI fees
<b>Main providers of CPD</b>	Education Scotland Local Authorities University providers of ITT	Scottish Government CPL Scottish Social Services Council – online Open badges and open education resources Early Years Scotland * Children in Scotland* National Day Nurseries Association* Care Inspectorate Hub* Education Scotland early learning resources Care and Learning Alliance Froebel in childhood practice SQA Forest Kindergarten	Scottish Government CPL Scottish Social Services Council – online Open badges and open education resources Early Years Scotland * Children in Scotland* National Day Nurseries Association** Care Inspectorate Hub* Education Scotland early learning resources Care and Learning Alliance Froebel in childhood practice SQA Forest Kindergarten
<b>Recognition/ advancement</b>	Senior Teacher scales; Head Teachers’ qualification supports application for headship.	None	None - but lead/manager practitioner registration supports applications for new role
<b>Special provision for Heads of ECEC</b>	‘Into Headship’ programme – generic to schools	Head Teachers must have either a BA Childhood Practice or PGdip or a Professional Development Award  Generic leader/man-	

Issue	Teacher QTS	Leader/Manager Childhood Practice	Core Childhood Practitioner
		ager registration required	
<b>Specialist modules for others</b>	Froebel Early Years course for generic teachers; SEN and subject specialist modules.	SEN, interagency and early years specialist modules	SEN, interagency and early years additional modules

\*Membership Organisations

### Recent research into CPD across the UK

**Source:** Rogers, S., C. Brown, and X. Poblete. 2017. *A Systematic Review of the Evidence Base for Professional Learning in Early Years Education* (the PLEYE review)

**Purpose:** The study had two main aims:

- Identify the most effective types of PDL approaches for improving outcomes for children in EYE
- Inform and have impact on policy and practice in the EYE sector as a necessary first step to developing PDL programmes that are effective in improving outcomes for children (Rogers et al. 2017, 14).

**Methodology:** Systematic review focusing on three main questions that emerged from the initial scoping exercise:

1. What evidence is there of impact of professional learning approaches for improving outcomes for children in EYE? Which approaches are more and less impactful?
2. What are the features of and the theory of action underpinning effective professional learning approaches in EYE?
3. What types of professional learning opportunities are available to EY practitioners and who provides them? How do these relate to 1. and 2. above? (Rogers et al. 2017, 19-20).

#### Key findings:

1. Reflection, feedback and follow-up matter: PDL programmes that provide opportunities for reflection, peer group discussion and regular feedback on learning and performance are effective at changing practice and improving outcomes for children.
2. Research-based interventions related to real world contexts are linked to improving practice and outcomes for children: Research-based interventions introducing new learning about children’s development and learning, or content and pedagogical knowledge appear to be linked to positive outcomes for children particularly when they are linked to practitioners’ professional contexts.
3. Combining research-based knowledge with knowledge of setting contexts supported by a coaching model of PDL appear to impact most positively on children’s learning outcomes: Programmes that combine new knowledge and content (from research) with knowledge gained from the participants’ own specific setting context appear to be most effective at achieving change to practice and positive impact on children’s learning.
4. Duration, frequency and intensity of PDL are important factors in achieving impact on outcomes for children (Rogers et al. 2017, 11-12).

#### Recommendations for policy and practice:

1. Key stakeholders in the EYE sector should work together to develop a set of agreed guidelines or minimum standards for the quality assurance of PDL programmes.

2. Develop a strategy for investment in evidence-informed professional development and learning in EYE
3. Develop and evaluate sector-wide EYE PDL intervention (Rogers et al. 2017, 11-15).

## Wales

The regulator for social care in Wales is *Social Care Wales*. They are proactive in addressing the CPD needs in early years. They commissioned a workforce survey in 2014 which found that the priorities for CPD differed considerably in the sector. The most popular form of CPD (57% of all staff), particularly in the PVI sector, was training provided by relevant membership organisations, such as the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

Since then, there has been an increased focus on CPD and registration (see *Chapter 7*) and Social Care Wales have affirmed their commitment to this area, stressing that it is individual workers' responsibility for their own professional development across their careers. They have developed a toolkit to support practitioners (Social Care Wales 2018) that provides a framework to guide ongoing development. It identifies seven steps for CPD:

1. Assessment of individual and organisational need
2. Identify development needs
3. Identify learning objectives, opportunities and resources
4. Plan development opportunities
5. Implement learning opportunities
6. Record outcomes
7. Review, accredit and refine learning

With the Welsh Government confirming its ongoing commitment towards registration of Early Years Practitioners (Welsh Government 2022b), the importance of CPD for the early years workforce contains to be the focus of policy.

## Scotland

**Source:** Dunn, B., C. McDonald, and J. Johnson. 2018. "Evidence of Quality Professional Development: A Study in Childhood Practice", In *Professional Development in Education*, 44(3), 397-411.

**Purpose:** The BA Childhood Practice (BACP) degree is a work-based degree provided at seven universities in Scotland and is a requirement of those in senior leadership roles in early years. This study particularly focused on the professional and personal development of these students.

**Methodology:** The small-scale action research project was undertaken by three university providers of the degree. A phenomenographic approach was employed to identify how perceptions of 'learning and affective experiences' form research assignments, questionnaires and interviews.

### **Key findings:**

The findings were grouped into three strands:

Professional skills and abilities:

- Knowledge in relationship to leadership and management became explicit rather than implicit and as a result facilitated changes in practice.
- Confidence in undertaking research meant research was integral to the students' practice.

Professional knowledge and understanding:

- Developing the skills in using theory to justify practice and confidence to debate practice issues.
- Recognising their role in disseminating knowledge
- Seeing issues from different perspectives.

Professional values and personal commitment:

- Participants reported they were better able to question the values and beliefs that underpinned practice.
- Increased understanding about the importance of reflection
- Increased confidence.

## 7. Working conditions and current workforce issues

### 7.1 Remuneration

The state-maintained school sectors across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have broadly comparable national agreements with the relevant long-established Teachers' Unions concerning the terms and conditions, remuneration and career structures for qualified Primary Teachers (Early Years) with QTS. The starting salary for a newly qualified teacher in the UK in 2022/23 will be around £28,000 – €32,590<sup>7</sup>) with an additional weighting payable in London as the most expensive area. In Scotland, incremental increases on an annual basis within each pay scale are almost automatic, though subject to satisfactory performance appraisal. Career structures allow for progression to higher pay scales on promotion and/or achievement of additional specialist or leadership and management awards. Senior Teacher rates start at around £42,000 (€48,885) while the pay for Head Teachers is based on the size of the school, with a minimum salary of around £54,000 (€62,852) for even the smallest village school.

Those classified as support staff, including Classroom/Teaching Assistants and Early Years Teachers with EYTS, earn considerably less, even if they also hold a relevant graduate level 6 qualification. There are no nationally agreed pay scales and there is considerable variation across Local Authorities. The current government's policy is to encourage the establishment of Free Schools and Academies (state maintained but outside of Local Authority control), so increasingly pay and conditions are at the discretion of the individual school. According to the National Careers Service website, a full-time Teaching Assistant working 30–40 hours per week can expect to earn between £13,000 and £23,000 (€15,131 and €26,770) per annum, with some experienced Higher Level Teaching Assistants (a specialist level 5 qualification) eligible to earn slightly more, depending on the school.

Similarly, there are no agreed terms and conditions for ECEC staff in the PVI sector, which historically has not been unionised, although in Scotland the Government's induction resources list two unions staff may want to join. There are also pay differentials between the public and private sector. The Social Mobility Report (2020) found that the average wage across the EY sector is £7.42 (€8.64) per hour, which is similar to the retail sector (£7.09, €8.25), but far lower than the average pay across the female workforce (£11.37, €13.23) and total working population (£12.57, €14.63).

The particularly low average pay rate in the PVI sector is partly due to high turnover and a high

<sup>7</sup> Conversion rate July 2023

proportion of young workers and apprentices under 21 for whom the national minimum wage is less than normal. More experienced core practitioners are more likely to have supervisory responsibilities and hence to earn slightly more. Nevertheless, these levels of pay are not enough to support a family. As a result, staff with families are often in the position of claiming in-work benefits through Universal Credit. According to Archer and Oppenheim (2021), 45% of the workforce are in this position.

Across the PVI sector there is no systematic career structure or provision for annual increments or additional payments for achieving higher level qualifications and graduate status. In 2022, the average salary for a manager started at £23,000 (£26,770). In England, employers and nursery owners in the PVI sector argue that they cannot afford to pay more given that the government effectively restricts a large part of their income of PVI settings through the low hourly funding rate for provision of the free part-time ECEC entitlement for all 3 and 4 year-olds and an increasing number of 2 year-olds. In addition, day nurseries and pre-schools are under pressure from government and the public to keep fees low so as to keep costs down for working parents. Similar challenges exist in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

## **7.2 Full-time and part-time employment in ECEC provision**

Working hours are variable but most full-time ECEC workers work for 36–40 hours per week. Shift work is particularly prevalent in day nurseries to accommodate opening from 8:00 to 18:00 for 48–50 weeks per annum. In contrast, many pre-schools and playgroups operate sessions within school hours of roughly 9:00–12:00 and 13:00–15:30/15:45 in school terms only (38 weeks per annum). As a result, part-time working is more common in sessional care. In Scotland data for the SSSC (2021) found that there was more part-time employment in the voluntary sector with a 46%/55% divide between part-time and full-time employment.

In the maintained schools sector the maximum hours worked by teachers are determined by national agreement as 1,260 per annum, but not all these need be on school premises. The majority of teachers are full time and teachers are paid 52 weeks per year. In contrast, Classroom/Teaching Assistants are more likely to be part time and often on hourly contracts that apply to term times only.

## **7.3 Support measures in the workplace for newly qualified and newly appointed staff**

All registered childcare settings across the UK are obliged by the relevant standards/framework to provide new staff with a basic induction programme covering areas such as health and safety and to allocate a supervisor/mentor to monitor and appraise their performance and identify additional training needs. Often this can be an informal arrangement with no specified time allowances for mentoring and support activities. How much is offered beyond this basic minimum is up to the local provider to decide.

The situation is different in Scotland. The National Standard for funding for 1,140 hours includes requirements for the management and leadership of staff to include appropriate induction tailored to the needs of individual staff. A national induction resource is available to support staff, particularly those new to the sector. Staff carry out work-based learning and are generally required to have a mentor to support them in their role. Local authorities may have local systems for mentoring or support within the workplace, but no national schemes exist.

The exception is for newly qualified/probationary teachers for whom national agreements specify reduced workloads, supervision and support arrangements during their first year while the probationer works to achieve the practising teacher's standards leading to full registration. During this

year the probationer also remains attached to an ITT provider for further training and development opportunities.

#### 7.4 Non-contact time

In the case of qualified teachers, national agreements specify a maximum number of contact hours per week and that all staff must be allowed at least 10 hours from this for preparation and marking. Other specified activities are by negotiation with the Head Teacher but there is a clear expectation of remission from teaching to fulfil them.

Such allowances are not standardised in the PVI sector and staff are often expected to write up observations and reports during quieter periods when children might be asleep or supervised by another or participating in a larger group activity such as listening to a story. Supervisory staff may be allowed some time for their supervision and administrative work at the discretion of the setting manager who themselves may be involved in direct childcare in order to maintain statutory ratios. However, standards require that such activities must not take senior staff away from direct involvement with children too frequently.

#### 7.5 Current staffing issues

Teaching as a profession is relatively stable and the mainly female pre-primary/primary workforce has good maternity leave arrangements that enable qualified teachers to return to work, should they wish. Teacher recruitment is controlled by central government for each nation through restricting the number of Initial Teacher Training places based on forecast births. Incentives are offered for specialist shortage subjects at secondary levels (e.g. Maths and Physics) but Primary Teacher recruitment has remained buoyant. However, wastage through drop out, career change and stress has increased in recent years and some areas (particularly the more rural and/or disadvantaged) have experienced shortages.

High turnover has long been recognised as a problem in the PVI sector. This is partly due to the preponderance of young staff; however, failure to retain the more experienced and better qualified is often related to low pay and poor career prospects.

This has worsened over the last few years with COVID-19, bringing greater challenge to the sector and there is a current crisis in recruitment and retention, despite ongoing investment by the four nations of the UK. Recruitment strategies to increase diversity have not been successful and ECEC continues to be staffed by a predominantly white female workforce. Changes in the free childcare offer to parents have also brought challenges. In Scotland, for example, the sector has expanded to meet the government's commitment to offering 1,140 hours, which was put back to 2021 following the COVID-19 pandemic. This has required recruitment across the sector – public and private. However, as in other parts of the UK, recruitment and retention were already an issue. The *Early Years and Childcare Workforce: Final Report* (Scottish Government and Convention of Scottish Local Authorities – COSLA 2019, 25) reinforced the challenges and the divide between public and private sector provision, with the “...independent sector employers much more likely to expect recruitment challenges in the next year (66%) than their third or public sector counterparts (50% and 37% respectively).”

The 1,140 hours' commitment has also raised issues in relation to funding, with Local Authorities paying more to public sector provision than to the private sector. The Scottish Government has pledged to increase funding to the latter sector to ensure the living wage could be achieved but research by the National Day Nurseries Association (2019) revealed that one in five local authorities will not be increasing the amount provided to the private and voluntary sector to ensure 1,140 hours.

The situation in relation to funding and its impact on recruitment and retention is echoed across



the other nations of the UK. In England, the Institute of Fiscal Studies (2021) noted that there had been ongoing increases in funding for the early years but that through the minimum wage and new taxes, the recent rise of 17p (20 cent) per child on the 30 hours 3 to 4-year offer would be insufficient in the context of rising costs.

## 8. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to staffing and professionalisation issues

### 8.1 England: Recent policy reforms

The *Early Years Workforce Strategy* (DfE 2017, 6) stated that it aimed “...to support delivery of good quality early years provision for all children from birth to five years.” The strategy focused on attracting more staff into the sector, continuing the development of specialist graduates with EYTS, improving the quality of training, increasing the diversity of the workforce, retaining and developing the workforce, developing career pathways, CPD and sector-led quality improvements. However, despite commitment to the importance of investing in the early years and despite ongoing investment, the workforce in England is currently facing considerable challenges that are compounded by the impact of COVID-19 and the lack of impetus to address the core issues of low pay, poor working conditions and low qualification levels (Bonetti 2020; Pascal et al. 2020).

These issues are reinforced by the Social Mobility report (2020) on the stability of the early years workforce and by the Nuffield Foundation research into early education’s role in shaping life chances (Archer and Oppenheim 2021). The report draws attention to the average wage being £7.42 (€8.64) an hour in 2018 and that 45% of those working in the early years were claiming state benefits. It also highlights the fact that rather than qualifications improving, they are variable and between 2014/15 to 2018/19 the staff percentage with an NVQ level 3 qualification reduced from 83% to 52%. This had risen to 59% in 2023 (DfE 2023b).

Furthermore, the Early Years Alliance (2023) research into recruitment and retention in the workforce found that year on year the sector is unable to recruit staff, there is increased reliance on agency staff and more people are considering leaving their positions. The research indicated that 48% of respondents were considering leaving their jobs. However, expanding access to early years provision requires growth in the number of places available and indicates that with the combination of staff turnover and increased entitlement to places, 50,000 more staff will be needed in 2024 and the same growth in 2025.

One of the ways the Government has addressed the workforce challenges is by reducing the ratios in settings, from 1:4 to 1:5 for 2 year-olds, the same ratio as in Scotland. The DfE launched a consultation into the proposals in 2023 and while research by the Early Years Alliance (2022) found that only 2% of the 9,000 respondents were in favour of the changes, the new ratios were introduced in January 2024 (DfE 2023b).

In addition to changes to ratios, the requirement for those with a level 3 qualification to hold a mathematics qualification to be included in ratios has also been changed. Apprentices and students can now be counted in ratio at the level below they are studying if the manager of the setting assesses it is appropriate (DfE 2023a).

The DfE is also continuing to invest in the sector with the COVID Recovery Plan (DfE 2022c) and ongoing focus on apprenticeship routes for the workforce (Institute of Apprenticeships and Technical Qualifications 2022). Additionally, the Government’s commitment to expand childcare



entitlement for working parents has continued. Prior to the 2015 general election a commitment was made to extend free ECEC from 15-30 hours per week for 38 weeks, for working parents. The focus on free hours connected to working parents has continued and from September 2025 all working families with a nine month-old child will be entitled to 30 hours of funded ECEC. The changes are being introduced incrementally, starting in April 2024. However, while these changes are based mainly on economic arguments, their impact on outcomes for the children appear to be missing from political debates. The changes also bring with them considerable challenge for a sector that is struggling with recruitment, retention and funding models (Institute of Fiscal Studies 2023).

## 8.2 Wales: Recent policy reforms

Wales is currently in the middle of a number of major policy changes that significantly impact on ECEC services and workforce. Under the *New Deal for the Education Workforce*, which builds on recommendations of the Furlong (2015) and Donaldson (2015) Reports, both teachers and support staff will have a 'structured entitlement' to ongoing professional and leadership development. For teachers this will include access to new Master's degrees (level 7 EQF) in Continuing Educational Practice or in Educational Leadership dependent on their chosen route as a senior specialist practitioner or potential Head Teacher (see Welsh Government 2015).

In relation to the childcare workforce, the EU Social Fund project *Progress for Success* covering west Wales and the valleys currently underway has three strands for improving qualification levels and professionalisation of the ECEC workforce:

- Strand 1 will fund existing practitioners with no or low levels of qualification to achieve level 3 in early years and/or play work.
- Strand 2 is designed to improve the assessment infrastructure through providing qualified assessor training at level 3.
- Strand 3 aspires to fund selected practitioners through a new suite of qualifications in childhood practice (developed by the Social Care Wales in 2016) from level 4 to level 6 EQF or graduate equivalent (see Welsh Government 2017b).

In 2017, Welsh Government finalised the Childcare, Play and Early Years Workforce Plan (Welsh Government 2017c) setting out their aims for development of the ECEC workforce. The three key themes are:

- Attracting high quality new recruits
- Raising standards and skills
- Investing in building capacity and capability.

## 8.3 Scotland: Recent policy reforms

In 2021, 3 and 4 year-olds became entitled to 1,140 hours Early Learning and Childcare a year; this expansion from 600 hours was paused for a year because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This has been accompanied by an expansion of staff and services, with a model referred to as 'Funding follows the child' with private and voluntary sector providers required to meet a 'National Standard' in order to gain Government funding.

In 2021, the Scottish Government began a pilot scheme to enable children born from August who would normally start school aged 4½ to 5 years to defer for an additional year in Early Learning and Childcare.

In March 2022, the Scottish Government announced the creation of three education bodies: A new qualifications agency (replacing the Scottish Qualifications Agency); a new professional learning, curriculum and assessment agency, and a new inspection agency (both replacing Education Scotland.) Early Learning and Care were mentioned in relation to the importance of setting a shared inspection framework with the Care Inspectorate.



## 8.4 Northern Ireland: Recent policy reforms

In July 2020, the Education Minister outlined the plans following the allocation of a £10.5 million (€12.5 million) funding package for the childcare sector in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Childcare Recovery Support package was allocated to help childcare providers to reopen, or remain open, and applied to ECEC and school age childcare settings, play groups and childminders. The package of measures included financial support to childcare providers to assist them to operate within the parameters of the Executive's childcare recovery plan, ensured as many providers as possible could open to assist parents returning to work and allowed for the continuation of the bespoke Approved Home Childcarer Scheme aimed at enabling parents to have their childcare needs met in their own homes

In January 2021, the *Children and Young People's Strategy* was published. This is the strategic framework through which departments work together to improve the wellbeing of all children and young people. It lists eight outcomes to be achieved for all children and young people, covering many aspects of children's lives including their physical and mental health, play and leisure, learning and achieving, safety and stability, economic and environmental wellbeing, contribution to society and rights and equality.

## 9. Recent country-specific research focusing on ECEC staff

Professionalisation and what it means to be a professional have been major topics for debate across the UK.

### 9.1 Research in England

#### Childcare and early years providers survey 2023

**Sources:** Department for Education 2023a; Adams, L., S. Coburn-Crane, A. Hassan, and J. Taylor 2023 (see *References* for further details).

**Purpose:** To monitor and evaluate childcare and early years provision to provide an insight into group-based providers, childminders and school-based provision.

**Methodology:** Large mixed-mode survey, completed online or by telephone, with 15,828 participants. The data gathered included staff to child ratios, children with special educational needs and disability (SEND), staff qualification and pay and information about the costs of providing care.

#### **Key findings:**

- There were an estimated 56,300 providers with at least one child aged 0–4 registered in England in 2023. These providers were offering over 1.5 million Ofsted registered childcare places.
- Early Years provision was delivered by an estimated 347,300 paid staff. Of these, 259,300 worked in group-based settings, 55,800 in schools and there were 32,200 childminders and childminder assistants.
- 19% of paid staff employed by all group-based providers were under 25 compared with just 8% of paid staff employed by school-based providers.
- 16% of staff in all group-based providers and 26% in school-based providers were 50 or older.
- The majority of paid staff in the Early Years' workforce were reported to be female (98%) and

- White British (83% in schools-based providers and 81% all group-based providers).
- The majority of Early Years staff employed by both school-based (85%) and all group-based providers (80%) was reported to be qualified to at least Level 3.
- Graduates (Level 6): Slight rise since 2022 with a third (34%) of staff in school-based settings and 11% in all group-based settings. Senior managers in group-based settings and Head Teachers, Teachers and Early Years Co-ordinators in school-based settings were more likely to be qualified at this level.
- 11% of staff in all group-based providers and 5% in all school-based provision earn less than the National Living Wage.

## ECEC and life chances

**Source:** Archer, N., and C. Oppenheim. 2021 (see *References* for further details).

**Purpose:** An exploration of the role of early education and care provision over the last two decades in England.

**Methodology:** Focused literature review from 2010 using peer-reviewed and grey literature.

### **Key findings relating to the quality of the workforce:**

- Despite all the growing evidence about the importance of a quality workforce for improving young children’s outcomes, qualifications are inconsistent, the workforce is undervalued and does not have the same status of others, such as schoolteachers.
- The workforce is marked by low pay and limited opportunities to progress. For example:
  - The average wage in the sector was £7.42 (€8.64) an hour in 2018, compared to £11.37 (€13.23) an hour across the female workforce
  - In 2019, 45% of childcare workers were claiming state benefits or tax credits
  - In the PVI sector there was a fall in NVQ level 3 qualifications (83% 2014/15 to 52% 2018/19).
- There is an apparent increase in staff turnover with the following factors being identified as key reasons:
  - Pay and responsibility
  - Lack of training
  - Lack of progression
  - Low status
  - Organisational culture
- Information about staff profiles is limited; the workforce is still predominantly white female, with a shift towards younger less qualified staff and there is little information about the level of roles held by staff from minority ethnic groups.
- Recruitment challenges
- Differences between qualification requirements in maintained sector (higher) than the PVI sector
- Despite the importance of CPD being recognised, its provision is increasingly fragmented.

## 9.2 Research in Wales

### Independent workforce review

**Source:** Bonetti, S., and K. Cooper. 2022 (see *References* for further details).

**Purpose:** An independent review into the Child, Play and Early Years (CPEY) workforce to support the next steps for professional registration.

**Methodology:** Mixed-methods study that employed desk-based research, semi-structured interviews and a workshop with stakeholders.

### **Key findings:**

Findings centred around three key themes:

- Defining the workforce and who should be included in a registry; practical elements of a registry.

There was support for developing a professional register and considerable recognition that it could raise the professionalism of the workforce. There was also caution about the complexities of setting up a register; there needed to be clear communication and a slow developmental approach so that the register evolved over time rather than being a finished product at the start. In 2020-2021, the number of workers thought to be working in registered CPEY settings was 13,656, however estimating the exact size of CPEY workforce is difficult. While some individuals, such as teachers, are registered, the majority are not. Furthermore, play workers are part of the CPEY workforce, but work in a range of organisations, some of which are not registered with the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and work with older children and young people.

- Qualifications and continuing professional development
- Lack of knowledge about the qualifications of the workforce, working conditions and career trajectories. Additionally, challenges in recruitment that preceded COVID have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

While the interviews evidence agreement that all those that work in CPEY should be valued for their role in children's lives, there was less agreement of if all should be registered. Additionally, some workers have multiple roles and work titles are varied.

**Implications:** This review has informed the next steps for the Welsh Government for the registration of Early Years Practitioners (see Welsh Government 2022b).

### 9.3 Research in Scotland

#### Professional development in Childhood Practice

**Source:** Dunn, B., C. McDonald, and D. Johnson. 2018 (see *References* for further details).

**Aims:** The study examined the contribution of the BA Childhood Practice work-based degree to professional and personal development, including leadership skills, analysed in relation to relevant models of professional development.

**Methods:** It drew upon evidence from three university providers, from research assignments, subsequent questionnaires and interviews with students. A phenomenographic approach was used to identify the perceptions of learning and affective experiences. In discussing the nature of professional development, the paper draws on theoretical frameworks and the Standard for Childhood Practice.

**Selected findings:** Findings revealed that characteristics identified in these models were evident in the degree, the most influential being knowledge and understanding, critical awareness, and changes to values and beliefs. These aspects promoted leadership and quality and underpinned increased self-confidence.

**Implications:** The main issue that emerged was the significance of a work-based model which promotes the development of higher level skills; this is relevant across professions

#### Documenting children's learning – resisting dominant discourses

**Source:** McNair L. J, C. Blaisdell, J. M. Davis, and L. J. Addison. 2021 (see *References* for further details).

**Aims:** This article highlights an action research project that sparked transformation regarding

how early years practitioners documented children's learning. The dominant discourse of standardisation and narrowing of early childhood education, encapsulated in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's International Early Learning Study, has resulted in the 'shaping' and 'testing' of young children around the globe. The OECD has become very interested in early childhood education and is an instrumental player today (Cohen et al. 2021). Consequently, the testing of young children has been instigated by governments to ensure children gain the accepted knowledge, skills and dispositions required to be successful learners.

**Methods:** Situated within this context of testing and standardisation, this article shares knowledge gained from a small action research project that took place in one Scottish early years setting. The study was stimulated by the early years practitioners of the setting, who strongly opposed the 'reductionist' formal 'tick-box' assessments produced by their local authority. These types of didactic formal assessments suggest that pedagogy is underpinned by a desire to tame, predict, prepare, supervise and evaluate learning. This article is of critical importance as it examines the imposition of didactic assessment from the practitioners' perspective. The practitioners in the study contested that 'tick-box' assessments diminished children's identities down to a list of judgements about their academic abilities, or lack thereof. The introduction of the 'tick-box' assessments presented a dilemma for the practitioners, in terms of the different views of the government and practitioners of what knowledge is worth knowing and what individuals and groups can learn.

**Selected findings:** Many of the practitioners from the Early Childcare and Learning setting positioned themselves and their work as being consciously different from what was going on in the wider sector. The setting introduced a new method to capture children's learning, which they named the 'Lived Story' approach. The article argues that Lived Stories are a form of narrative assessment designed to track children's progress whilst respecting the complexity of their learning, their position within the learning process, the flow/fluidity of their ways of being and their ability to act in radical, creative and innovative ways.

**Implications:** The article concludes that by using 'Lived Stories' practitioners were able to lessen the surety of the language they use. The article highlights that as practitioners write Lived Stories and assess children's progress they are freed to use terms such as 'wondering, puzzling, thinking, exploring', demonstrating that this language, and the ideas it enables, are on a continuum; a journey that spans a lifetime.

### Transferring ECEC services to the education sectors in England, Scotland and Sweden

**Source:** Cohen, B., P. Moss, P. Petrie, and J. Wallace. 2021 (see *References* for further details).

Between 1996–1998, England, Scotland and Sweden moved responsibility for all early childhood education and care (ECEC) and school-age childcare (SACC) services from welfare into education. Following an earlier study researching these reforms up to 2003, this article examines and compares subsequent developments and consequences of the initial reform, from 2003–2017. These differed widely. Sweden succeeded in achieving further integration and better access to services, while services in England and Scotland remained divided and fragmented. England's attempt at major reform did not survive political change; while Scotland's more ambitious universalist approach was constrained by lack of appropriate devolved powers and a clear vision of how ECEC and SACC might fit into the education agenda. Undue dominance of the school and the teaching profession posed risks in all three countries. The article considers possible reasons for the differing responses to a common policy change, including the different histories of ECEC and SACC prior to transfer, processes of subsequent policy development, and the effects of differing welfare regimes and path dependency.



## 9.4 Research in Northern Ireland

### Strategies, systems and services in Northern Ireland

**Source:** McMillan, D. J., and B. McConnell. 2015 (see *References* for further details).

**Background:** Education in Northern Ireland has a particular distinctiveness and ECEC policy development has not always followed the lead of England. It is largely still a two-tier, split system of variable quality, with a voluntary and private sector childcare staffed by vocationally trained, poorly paid individuals and graduate teacher-led statutory early education provision. Attempts at a more integrated approach to ECEC policy development foundered after the draft Early Years (0–6) Strategy was rejected on consultation and the Department of Education reverted to a more easily manageable Learning to Learn strategy focusing on 3 to 6 year-olds.

**Purpose:** To explore issues of language and power in the NI government policy document *Learning to Learn: a framework for early years education and learning*

**Methodology:** Critical discourse analysis (after Ozga 2000) using a framework of context, texts and consequences to generate a text analysis protocol.

**Findings:** The article describes the source of the policy as rooted in the previous attempt at an integrated strategy which had generated huge interest and around 2,000 consultation responses, many in support of the principles and vision but not its focus on largely educational interventions rather than a more holistic approach recognising learning as beginning pre-birth that was apparent in the government's own commissioned evidence paper. The 'rights-based, inclusive language' (McMillan and McConnell 2015, 249) adopted by the 2013 framework reflected the advisory role of the early years stakeholder group and demonstrated awareness of wider global policies such as the UNCRC. Despite claims of egalitarianism special mention was given in the document, perhaps for political reasons, to Irish medium provision, although this accounted in reality for only a very small proportion of provision.

The Learning to Learn framework was intentionally realigned with the Department of Education's core objectives of raising standards and reducing underachievement in education. The school readiness agenda is, hence, central and only tempered somewhat by reference to the importance of the home learning environment and supporting parents. Care is notable by its absence and reference to the care/nurturing function only appears once in the document.

Ministerial endorsement refers to a two-strand approach with the second strand being cooperation with other departments and agencies to address wider family issues but the targets are vague and represent a considerable watering down from the previous strategy's ambition of integrated education and care within a framework of wider family support. On workforce issues, the Learning to Learn policy exhorts the PVI sector to make the best use of the expertise of qualified teachers (Early Years specialists in advisory roles), reinforcing the 'dominant discourse that statutory is best'. However, the article identifies a 'deafening silence' on the issue of raising workforce qualifications. The benefits of CPD are recognised but it is proposed that this is achieved through outstanding settings (mainly from the statutory sector) leading regional networks and making use of the Excellence in Early Education Fund.

The authors conclude that the recession has directly constrained government policy and prevented further expansion of early years provision or the pursuit of graduate leadership as a goal. In addition, the political and social context in which 'segregated education is the norm' and legislative changes require cross-party agreement, fosters insularity from global perspectives and mitigates against more radical change.

## 10. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

Over the last two decades the ECEC workforce in the UK has been the focus of ongoing investment, both in terms of workforce reform and of providing increasing hours of ‘free’ childcare for parents. There have also been significant developments in our knowledge of child development, in particular brain development and attachment; the impact of early trauma and the importance of infant mental health. However, these developments are often overshadowed by the ongoing challenges within the ECEC systems. Three broad barriers repeatedly appear in the literature: the mixed market of ECEC provision, funding, and the nature of the workforce (Nuffield 2022). This research also provided evidence confirming the rhetoric that those working in ECEC are passionate about their work but do not feel valued by policy makers.

There is also the ongoing debate about the purpose of early years provision. Is it about providing ‘childcare’ while parents work or about high-quality early learning experiences that all young children should have access to? The relationship between the cost of childcare and winning voters is evident in general elections and the decision by the English Government to reduce the staff to child ratios for 2 to 3 year-olds from 1:4 to 1:5 has been marketed as bringing England in line with other countries and driving costs down for parents (Lesh and Niemietz 2022). However, a purely economic debate misses the importance of high quality early learning experiences on lifelong outcomes, the importance of graduate leadership and integrated services.

Each of the four nations has, in different ways, recognised the importance of integrated services. Scotland and Wales have consistently been more proactive in this area and the approach is embedded in their ongoing workforce plans. However, the challenges of the separate interests of the wider health, care and education sectors in presenting barriers, especially in inspection and regulation systems, cannot be underestimated. For example, the evaluation of the *Integration Transformation Programme* (Welsh Government 2022d) highlighted that progress is being made but is impacted upon, in part, by organisational barriers.

In England, one of the aims of the *Childcare Act 2006* was the integration of education and care. However, the change of Government in 2011 resulted in a greater focus on *school readiness* and outcome measures. The development of Children’s Centres (hubs of integrated working) was also impacted upon by the change in Government and once funding stopped being ring-fenced they began to decline in numbers. At the same time, the recent *Best Start for Life* policy direction (Department of Health and Social Care 2021) has put integrated working formally back on the agenda, especially with the introduction of Family Hubs. The important point here is that families benefit from an integrated approach to services that they can easily access. The challenge is for the services involved in the early years is to learn from previous experiences and not repeat past mistakes.

### Workforce

Employers and membership organisations have warned about a looming crisis in recruitment, staff shortages and availability of suitably qualified staff. This is partly due to low status, low pay and poor career prospects across the private, voluntary and independent ECEC sector. It has been exacerbated by competition for staff within the wider care sector. The uptake of training places for ECEC qualifications at level 3 (EQF level 4) and at graduate level 6 (EQF level 6) in England has also been affected by more stringent entry requirements for the Early Years Educator (EYE) and Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) qualifications. EYTS entry requirements were

aligned to those for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) in 2013, yet they do not have the same employment benefits, nor a protected year for newly qualified teachers.

The ECEC staffing crisis had been brought to a head by the entitlement to free ECEC for 3 to 4 year-olds from roughly 15 hours to 30 hours per week. Given that many settings offer predominantly part-time places (e.g. morning or afternoon sessions), doubling the entitlement has required a major expansion in the number of places which has inevitably increased demand for qualified staff. This situation is being exacerbated further by the incremental changes from April 2024 for working parents to access 30 funded hours for infants from nine months old.

The pay and conditions in the PVI sector have also made it difficult to recruit more qualified practitioners and the last few years have seen recruitment and retention become more challenging. There is also an increasing number of settings closing or being concerned that they will continue to be viable businesses.

Research clearly identifies the benefits of a graduate led workforce in ECEC but the ongoing investment in graduate programmes, such as EYTS in England, has highlighted further the differences in pay, status and working conditions and benefits between those with EYTS and their teaching colleagues with QTS – a situation in which the Government has no will to intervene. This two-tier system between the private and public sector, resulting from the mixed economy of provision in ECEC, needs to be addressed alongside the other complex issues. Consequently, there needs to be a major overhaul of the early years system (Nuffield Foundation 2022). Furthermore, it is imperative that policy makers articulate a clear vision about the workforce. Work has been undertaken to raise the profile of the career routes open to those working in ECEC and to make the different qualifications clearer in England (DfE 2022b) but more needs to be done. Those working in the sector need to know there are opportunities for progression, a strong CPD system to support their development and pay scales that reflect their qualifications and experience, whatever part of the UK they work in.

The DfE in England has pledged £153 million (€174,3 Mill.) to develop the early years workforce, including developing an expert and mentoring programme (DfE 2022d). This is an important and much-needed step, but previous experience has shown that regardless of funding, the inherent problems of low pay, status and staff turnover are difficult to change. Arguably, the steps that have been taken more recently by the DfE to address workforce issues and improve CPD opportunities, get lost in the wider debates about sustainability and funding.

## Funding

There has been an ongoing argument between the ECEC sector and governments that current rates of funding for the free entitlement are insufficient to cover the costs of providing high quality ECEC places, which need to be cross-subsidised through fees for additional hours and additional services such as meals. For some families meeting these costs is a prohibitive factor in taking up their 'free' hours, especially for those on the lowest incomes.

Funding for early years in England is complex, with the funds that each local authority receives, calculated through the Early Years National Funding Formula. Since 2019–20, local authorities have had to pay a universal base rate to all settings, then can add supplements if settings meet one or more of four categories, for example have a higher number of children with English as a second language (see Foster 2022).

Reports by different organisations have repeatedly warned about funding issues. In 2015, the Institute for Public Policy Research expressed concern that "... the government will significantly underfund the planned extension, and that this will result in a poorly delivered policy with negative outcomes for children and families and for the sustainability of the sector" (Cory 2015, 3). More recently the Institute of Fiscal Studies (2021) has drawn attention to the issue that the



increase in government funding for the 3 to 4 years offer in England will be consumed by increases in living costs. Following the announcement of the expansion of funded ECEC places in 2023, concerns were reaffirmed for the financial challenges that the sector faces (Institute of Fiscal Studies 2023). Furthermore, one of the reasons why the ECEC sector argue against changing staff to child ratios in England is that it will make little difference to business costs for several interrelated reasons, including recruitment issues, pay and staff turnover and the substantial increases in the cost of living.

A further area that impacts on funding is sufficiency and the fluctuations in take-up of places. As the Nuffield research (2022) into the impact of COVID-19 on the sector found, the pandemic shone a light on to the importance of ECEC, but with the increasing cost of living impacting on family budgets and settings having to navigate funding, staffing and sufficiency issues, action must be taken to shape a more resilient sector than is able to navigate the ongoing challenges it faces.

### **Mixed economy**

There remain huge disparities in terms of status, pay, terms and conditions of service between those in maintained nursery/primary schools who hold QTS and the rest of the workforce, whether graduate or not. Governments across the UK have refused to address this issue and have maintained the position that rates of pay and terms and conditions of service of ECEC workers are up to individual employers to decide provided they comply with the legislative frameworks of employment rights and the requirements of a national minimum and living wage. In fact, there is also increasing evidence in England that larger chains are acquiring smaller settings (Lloyd and Simon 2022). If the purchasing chain is a for-profit organisation, staffing costs can be up to 14% lower than that for non-profit settings (Simon et al. 2022).

This neo-liberal approach of leaving it all to employers and individuals to fund simply does not work in a situation where settings are small scale and struggling to survive financially and in which the workforce is extremely low paid. This increasing shift to some smaller settings being purchased by large for-profit chains adds a new level of concern for a sector that is struggling. Staff retention is even more challenging and there are ongoing concerns in England and Scotland of graduate leaders moving into teaching or other careers because of the better pay and conditions. Furthermore, the drive to increase qualifications for setting managers and leaders in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland leaves practitioners questioning whether investing their time in training is worth it given the lack of financial recognition of their qualifications.

### **ECEC policy strategy**

ECEC policy has developed differently across the four nations of the UK, with Wales and Scotland focusing on a raft of changes to strengthen the early childhood period, improve outcomes, raise the qualification level for leadership positions and support for families. None of these nations are finding the process easy and, as indicated before, the inherent challenges of pay, the mixed economy of provision and issues with the workforce all act as barriers to change. In Northern Ireland policy has also focused on raising the qualification for managers to level 5 and, like Wales and Scotland, recognise and promote 'play' as a crucial part of early years learning.

In England, early years policy remains politically contentious. Actions such as raising the entry requirements for EYE and EYTS qualifications and not granting QTS to Early Years Teachers with EYTS, alongside initiatives such as the extension of the free entitlement, do not appear to have been thought through in terms of the impact on recruitment and shortages of qualified staff. This situation has been compounded by COVID-19. Research evidences the importance of high-



quality early years experiences for young children, yet in England the ECEC sector has faced continual changes in ministerial responsibility. Despite COVID-19 highlighting how important ECEC is to the economy of the nation, the sector continually feels unheard, undervalued, underfunded, susceptible to policy changes and increasingly open to the challenges of acquisition by for-profit chains – a situation which perpetuates the view that those working in the ECEC sector are not as important as others working with children and families.

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## Appendix I: Acronyms and definitions

### UK wide

**BME:** Black or Minority Ethnic is the term most usually used in the collection of workforce statistics to represent staff who self-declare as being of non-white British heritage or those with a background of migration.

**Childminder:** A person who cares for children from birth to five in their own home for more than 2 hours a day and for reward. May also be funded to provide ECEC for 2/3 to 5 year-olds.

**Children's Centres** focus on a wide range of provision for children, often including day care, and parent support in a particular neighbourhood. Mainly associated with the Sure Start initiative in disadvantaged areas in England and Northern Ireland (or Flying Start in Wales). Children's Centres are on the decline in England (see Family Hubs).

**Day Nursery:** Provider of full-day care for groups of children under five, normally while parents work or study. Mainly private for-profit but also can be community-based or managed by a voluntary organisation. Usually from 18 months but some accept babies under one.

**ITT/ITE:** Initial Teacher Training or Initial Teacher Education are the terms used for the regulated training of teachers leading to Qualified Teacher Status.

**LA:** Around 150 Local Authorities distribute funding and provide local administrative services and support to local services, including children's services, throughout the UK. They are partly financed by national government grants and partly through local taxation based on private properties and business rates.

**ONS:** The Office for National Statistics is responsible for collecting, analysing and disseminating statistics about the UK's economy, society and population.

**Nanny:** A person employed by parents to care for one or more children in the child's own home.

**Nursery School:** State maintained or independent/private provider of pre-school education for children from 2–3 to 5.

**Nursery Class:** Class for 2, 3 or 4 year-olds that is part of a primary school.

**Out-of-School Care/Clubs:** Provision for school aged children (4–5 and over) before and/or after the school day begins, usually but not always on school premises.

**Pre-School:** Provider of mainly part-time ECEC for groups of children from 2–3 to 5. Often these are parent or community run and rely partly on parent volunteers.

**PVI:** The Private, Voluntary and Independent sector encompasses all types of providers of ECEC services outside of maintained schools. Private provision mainly includes day nurseries and childminders that are operated as private enterprises on a for-profit basis. This includes both privately owned single day nurseries and company owned chains of nurseries. Voluntary (sometimes known as voluntary and community) encompasses not-for-profit parent-run pre-school playgroups, community day nurseries and those operated by large voluntary organisations such as Action for Children. Independent refers to the independent schools sector that have nursery schools, classes or day nurseries attached.

**QTS:** Qualified Teacher Status is the qualification prescribed under the 1944 Education Act for all teachers in maintained schools and classes. Teachers with QTS must be registered and regulated by the relevant General Teaching Council (or equivalent) in each of the four nations. Standards, assessment, education and training requirements and the number of training places are also set down nationally.

### England

**CACHE:** Council for Awards in Childcare and Education. <https://www.cache.org.uk/>

**DBS:** The Disclosure and Barring Service provide checks against police records and the statutory lists of those barred from working with children across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. All those who work with children and/or vulnerable adults must be checked including regular volunteers <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service>

**EYE:** The Early Years Educator qualification at level 3 RQF (level 4 EQF) is based on standards set down by the National College for School Leadership for all those working in ECEC other than Qualified Teachers and those holding graduate Early Years Teacher Status. It replaces all other previously accepted qualifications at this level in England and is strongly education focused. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-educator-level-3-qualifications-criteria>

**EYFS:** The Early Years Foundation Stage in England is the statutory framework that applies to all Ofsted registered providers for children from birth to 5 inclusive including childminders, nurseries and reception classes in schools. It sets out the minimum standards for health and safety as well as all aspect of children’s development and learning.

**EYTS:** Early Years Teacher Status is a professional graduate qualification at level 6 EQF in England only. It is primarily education focused though aimed at all those who work with young children 0–5., i.e. until the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is not recognised as equivalent to QTS for the purpose of employment in maintained schools. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-teachers-standards>

**Family Hubs:** One-stop-shops for families and children 0–19 (up to 25 for young people with special needs and/or a disability). Core focus on 0–2 age group.

**Ofqual:** The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation regulates qualifications, examinations and assessments in England <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual>

**Ofsted:** The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills regulates and inspects schools, and children’s services including Early Years. <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>

**RQF:** The Regulated Qualifications Framework replaced the Qualifications and Curriculum Framework providing a single simple system showing the level and size of all qualifications approved by Ofqual for use in schools and colleges across England. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/461298/RQF\\_Bookcase.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/461298/RQF_Bookcase.pdf)

## Wales

**CIW:** The Care Inspectorate for Wales inspects all registered care provision including early years settings other than schools. [www.cssiw.org.uk/?lan=en/](http://www.cssiw.org.uk/?lan=en/)

**ESTYN** is the Educational Inspectorate in Wales covering all schools and funded early education provision wherever it is offered. <http://www.estyn.gov.wales>

**EWC:** The Education Workforce Council for Wales carries out regulatory functions of the General Teaching Council for Wales. Its remit covers standards, registration, initial training and CPD of teachers in schools and further education, learning support staff and youth workers. <https://www.ewc.wales/site/index.php/en/>

**Flying Start** is part of the Welsh Government’s early years strategy aimed at children under 4 living in disadvantaged areas. It provides an enhanced health visiting service, parenting programmes, centre-based part-time ECEC and access to speech and language support. <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/children-and-young-people/parenting-support-guidance/help/flyingstart/?lang=en>

**Qualifications Wales** is the new regulator for qualifications, examinations and assessments in schools and colleges in Wales and maintains the Welsh Qualifications Framework (broadly equivalent to Ofqual in England). <http://qualificationswales.org/?lang=en>

**SW:** Social Care Wales registers all care provision including early years settings other than schools and determines appropriate qualifications for employment at different levels <http://www.ccwales.org.uk/early-years-and-childcare-worker/>

## Scotland

**CIS:** The Care Inspectorate for Scotland inspects (but does not register) all types of care provision, including early years settings other than schools. <http://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/about-us>

**Disclosure Scotland** provides checks against police records and the statutory lists of those barred from working with children in Scotland and liaises with the DBS in England. All those who work with children and/or vulnerable adults must be checked including regular volunteers. <https://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk>

**Education Scotland** is the education inspectorate responsible for all phases of education in schools and early years settings. <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk>

**ELC:** Early Learning and Care – the term used in Scotland instead of Early Childhood Education and Care.

**GTCS:** The General Teaching Council (Scotland) is the registration and regulatory body for the teaching profession <http://www.gtcs.org.uk/about-gtcs/about-us.aspx>



**SCQF:** The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework sets out all the regulated qualifications available to schools and colleges in Scotland across 8 different levels and illustrates the interface with higher education awards from level 9 (EQF level 6; Honours graduate) to 12 (level 8 EQF or Ph.D.) <http://scqf.org.uk/the-framework/>

**SQA:** The Scottish Qualifications Authority is the body that regulates and awards all forms of vocational and academic qualifications in Scotland other than those offered by universities and maintains the SCQF. <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/70972.html>

**SSSC:** The Scottish Social Services Council is the registration and regulatory body for social work, care provision and care professionals, including early years services other than schools. <http://www.sssc.uk.com>

## Northern Ireland

**CCEA:** The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment is responsible for advising government and producing guidelines on the curriculum, approving qualifications and monitoring the standards of awards and also acts as an Awarding Body in its own right for a range of awards outside of Universities. <http://ceea.org.uk>

**Childcare Partnerships:** The five regional Childcare Partnerships bring together representatives from across the statutory, voluntary, community and independent sectors in order to support parents, providers and employers in providing and gaining access to high quality affordable childcare. Policy responsibilities include workforce strategy for the early years, childcare and playwork workforce and quality improvement. <http://www.childcarepartnerships-ni.org>

**DENI:** The Department of Education (Northern Ireland) has devolved responsibility for all forms of educational provision, including funded pre-school education and Sure Start to local authorities. <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk>

**Early Years** (formerly NIPPA – the Northern Ireland Pre-School Playgroups Association) is the largest membership organisation representing preschools, nurseries and other groups from the voluntary, community and independent sector in Northern Ireland. <http://www.early-years.org>

**ETINI:** The Education and Training Inspectorate in Northern Ireland inspects all phases of education wherever these are delivered including Pre-school and Foundation Stage <http://www.etini.gov.uk>

**NI Direct** is the Northern Ireland government website that explains how services are organised, regulated and inspected. <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/early-years-teams>

## Appendix II: Explanatory note on UK qualification levels

### England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Of the nine qualification levels in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (Gov.UK 03.10.2022), the following five are relevant to this report. The stated examples apply only to the education systems of the three nations.

Level 3: e.g. A level or International Baccalaureate Diploma; level 3 award/certificate/diploma

Level 4: e.g. Higher National Certificate; level 4 award/certificate/diploma/NVQ

Level 5: e.g. Higher National Diploma or Foundation Degree; level 5 award/certificate/diploma

Level 6: e.g. Bachelor's degree with/without honours; level 6 award/certificate/diploma

Level 7: e.g. Master's degree, postgraduate certificate in education, level 7 award/certificate/diploma

### Scotland

There are three qualification levels relevant to this report in Scotland:

Level 6: e.g. Scottish Higher; National Certificate.

Level 7: e.g. Higher Level Certificate

Level 9: e.g. Bachelor's degree with/without honours