

Early Years Educator v2.0

☆ Level 3 £ £7,000 18 months

1. What the role entails

In their daily work, an early years educator interacts with children, parents, carers, colleagues, and wider multi-agency professionals such as health visitors, early help services, social workers, and speech and language therapists. This includes supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Early years educators follow the early years foundation stage (EYFS) requirements set by government for the learning, development, and care of children from birth to 5 in both indoor and outdoor environments.

Early years educators are responsible for ensuring a safe and secure environment for children's learning. They ensure that the learning environment and provision is inclusive and supports all children, and can demonstrate a clear understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion. Early years educators teach and facilitate children's learning play. They apply the observation, assessment and planning cycle to support progress and children's development. An early years educator will act as the key person for one or more children within their setting.



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2. On-programme

An apprentice will typically spend 18 months on-programme (this means in training before the gateway to completion) working towards occupational competence. They **must** spend a minimum of 8 months on-programme and complete the minimum required off-the-job training time, in line with the apprenticeship funding rules.

The apprentice must receive training to develop the occupational standard's knowledge and skills (K&S) criteria and achieve English and maths in line with the DfE apprenticeship funding rules, if required. To count within the ratios at Level 3, staff must also have achieved a suitable Level 2 qualification in English. Setting managers must hold a suitable Level 2 qualification in maths or must achieve one within 2 years of starting in the position. These are additional EYFS requirements that are independent of the apprenticeship.

3. Gateway to completion requirements

Gateway to completion should be used as the final opportunity to check an apprentice has met all the requirements for completion. An apprentice can only be put forward for gateway to completion when the apprentice and their employer (in consultation with the centre) are content they have attained the sufficient requirements to successfully complete the apprenticeship, and the apprentice has achieved their apprenticeship assessment.

For the Level 3 Early Years Educator, the requirements are:

- English and maths qualifications in line with the apprenticeship funding rules
- confirmation from the employer that the apprentice has met the behaviour requirements as set out in the apprenticeship assessment plan
- successful completion of a Paediatric First Aid qualification or an Emergency Paediatric First Aid qualification.

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4. Apprenticeship assessment

The apprenticeship assessment for Early Years Educator contains two methods of assessment:



Assessment 1: Observation with Question and Answer (Q&A)

This assessment method has two components:

- Observation
- Q&A.

Together, these components give the apprentice the opportunity to demonstrate the assessment criteria mapped to this assessment method.

In the Observation, an assessor observes the apprentice completing their day-to-day duties in their workplace under normal working conditions for up to 50 minutes.

The Q&A may last up to 30 minutes and is designed as a targeted supplement rather than a standalone assessment. The scope and depth of questioning will depend on the quality and completeness of the Observation. This allows the assessor to tailor the Q&A to confirm observed activity, address any gaps in assessment criteria, build on partial evidence and explore understanding where needed, particularly where evidence may support higher grading decisions.

The Observation with Q&A is graded fail, pass or distinction.

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Assessment 2: Professional Discussion or Case Study

Centres must select **one** of the following two options as the second assessment method for the apprentice; a Professional Discussion or a Case Study. Once the apprentice has begun any assessment activity, the selected second assessment method cannot be changed.

Option 1: Professional Discussion

In the Professional Discussion, an assessor and apprentice have a formal two-way conversation. It gives the apprentice the opportunity to demonstrate the assessment criteria mapped to this assessment method. The Professional Discussion must be structured to give the apprentice the opportunity to demonstrate the K&S mapped to this assessment method to the highest available grade. The Professional Discussion may last up to 1 hour.

Option 2: Case Study based on Child Study

The apprentice is required to complete a Case Study on one child or more, that they have supported over time, demonstrating the assessment outcomes through the relevant K&S. The Case Study should typically be completed over a period of 8 to 12 weeks to ensure relevance, authenticity and continuity of evidence. The written Case Study must be between 2,000 and 4,000 words.

The same set of assessment criteria is applied whether the apprentice completes the Professional Discussion or the Case Study, ensuring full comparability between

both options within assessment method 2. Training providers must select the most appropriate assessment method 2 option for the apprentice based on their role responsibilities, workplace context and ability to demonstrate the required competencies.

The Professional Discussion or Case Study is graded fail, pass or distinction.

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Assessment 2: Professional Discussion or Case Study

This apprenticeship standard offers a tiered approach, giving centres the flexibility to choose the delivery model that best suits their needs.

Assessment Method 2 can be delivered through either a centre-assessed model or an NCFE-assessed model. In the centre-assessed model, centre assessors deliver and grade the assessment, with outcomes subject to Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) and NCFE External Quality Assurance (EQA). In the NCFE-assessed model, assessments are delivered and graded directly by NCFE assessors.. Both options are supported by robust quality assurance processes to ensure valid, reliable and consistent assessment outcomes.

	Case Study	Professional Discussion
Centre assessed	Delivered and assessed by centre assessors, subject to IQA and NCFE EQA.	Delivered and assessed by centre assessors, subject to IQA and NCFE EQA.
NCFE assessed	Delivered and assessed directly by NCFE assessors.	Delivered and assessed directly by NCFE assessors.

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5. Grade aggregation table

Observation with Q&A	Professional Discussion or Case Study	Overall Grading
Pass	Pass	Pass
Pass	Distinction	Pass
Distinction	Pass	Pass
Distinction	Distinction	Distinction

A fail in any assessment will result in a fail overall.

6. Completion and certification

Once NCFE verifies the apprentice has successfully completed all apprenticeship assessment methods and gateway to completion requirements, they will activate certification. Working with the apprenticeship certificate issuing authority, NCFE will ensure the apprentice receives their certificate.

7. What next?

Completion of the Early Years Educator apprenticeship may provide progression opportunities to more senior roles in the early years sector. It may also be possible to progress to the Level 5 Learning and Skills Teacher apprenticeship.

Why NCFE?

We are an approved Assessment Organisation (AO) specialising in apprenticeship assessment across health, education, social care, business, active leisure and digital apprenticeship standards. NCFE offers flexible and reliable apprenticeship assessment solutions supported by sector expertise, guidance documents and proactive service and support.