



Qualification Specification



Qualification summary

Qualification title	NCFE CACHE Level 2 Technical Specialist in Mental Health in the Early Years (Certificate)
Ofqual qualification number (QN)	610/4509/3
Guided learning hours (GLH)	105
Total qualification time (TQT)	130
Minimum age	16
Qualification purpose	This qualification is designed for learners who wish to understand mental health in young children in the early years (from birth to 5 years old) and the role of the Early Years Practitioner to support children's mental health and wellbeing. This is a knowledge and skills-based qualification. Through achieving this qualification, learners will develop knowledge which would support progression to further qualifications and into relevant employment in the health and social care or education sectors.
Grading	Achieved/not yet achieved
Assessment method	Internally assessed and externally quality assured portfolio of evidence.
Work/industry placement experience	The learner must be working, volunteering or on practical placement in an appropriate setting to be able to meet the assessment requirements of this qualification.
Occupational standards	This qualification builds on the outcomes within the Early Years Practitioner occupational standard (ST0888) V1.0. The specialist duties have been written to build upon the knowledge, skills and behaviours in the Early Years Practitioner occupational standard: 1. Recognise mental health concern in children 2. Liaise with the child's family, colleagues and other professionals to support children with mental health concern 3. Champion positive mental health in an early years setting for holistic health and wellbeing 4. Model co-regulation for children
Regulation information	This is a regulated qualification. The regulated number for this qualification is 610/4509/3.
Funding	This qualification may be eligible for funding. For further guidance on funding, please contact your local funding provider.



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Section 1: introduction

Centres must ensure they are using the most recent version of the Qualification Specification on the NCFE website.

Aims and objectives

This qualification aims to:

- focus on the study of mental health within the context of young children in the early years
- offer breadth and depth of study, incorporating a key core of knowledge

The objectives of this qualification are to:

- understand key issues surrounding mental health for young children in the early years
- understand the significance of attachment and adverse childhood experiences for young children in the early years
- understand the role of the Early Years Practitioner supporting mental health and wellbeing for young children in the early years

Support Handbook

This Qualification Specification must be used alongside the mandatory Support Handbook, which can be found on the NCFE website. This contains additional supporting information to help with planning, delivery and assessment.

This Qualification Specification contains all the qualification-specific information you will need that is not covered in the Support Handbook.

Guidance for entry and registration

This qualification is designed for learners who would like to learn about mental health in children in the early years.

It may also be useful to learners studying qualifications in the following sectors/areas:

- mental health
- early years
- childminding
- support roles

Registration is at the discretion of the centre in accordance with equality legislation and should be made on the NCFE Portal.

There are no specific prior skills/knowledge a learner must have for this qualification. However, learners may find it helpful if they have already achieved a level 2 qualification.

Centres are responsible for ensuring that all learners are capable of achieving the units and learning outcomes (LOs) and complying with the relevant literacy, numeracy, and health and safety requirements.



Learners registered on this qualification should not undertake another qualification at the same level, or with the same/a similar title, as duplication of learning may affect funding eligibility.

Achieving this qualification

To be awarded this qualification, learners are required to successfully achieve **3 units** from the mandatory units.

Please refer to the list of units in appendix A or the unit summaries in section 2 for further information.

To achieve this qualification, learners must successfully demonstrate their achievement of all LOs of the units as detailed in this Qualification Specification. A partial certificate may be requested for learners who do not achieve the full qualification but have achieved at least one whole unit; partial achievement certificate fees can be found in the Fees and Pricing document on the NCFE website.

Progression

Learners who achieve this qualification could progress to the following:

- employment
 - mental health practitioner
 - mental health nurse
 - mental health assistant
 - early years educator
 - early years assistant
- further education

Age ranges covered by the qualification

This qualification covers young children in the early years (from birth to 5 years old).

Resource requirements

There are no mandatory resource requirements for this qualification, but centres must ensure learners have access to suitable resources to enable them to cover all the appropriate LOs.

Work/industry placement experience

The learner must be working, volunteering or on practical placement in an appropriate setting to be able to meet the assessment requirements of this qualification.

How the qualification is assessed

Assessment is the process of measuring a learner's skill, knowledge and understanding against the standards set in a qualification.

This qualification is internally assessed and externally quality assured.

The assessment consists of one component:



- an internally assessed portfolio of evidence, which is assessed by centre staff and externally quality assured by NCFE (internal quality assurance must still be completed by the centre as usual)

Learners must be successful in this component to gain the NCFE CACHE Level 2 Technical Specialist in Mental Health in the Early Years (Certificate) 610/4509/3.

Simulation is not permitted for this qualification, however, as the skills-based outcomes do not require direct observation, learners are able to reflect on their experiences within their settings in order to meet these outcomes.

Unless otherwise stated in this specification, all learners taking this qualification must be assessed in English and all assessment evidence presented for external quality assurance must be in English.

Internal assessment

Each learner must create a portfolio of evidence generated from appropriate assessment tasks to demonstrate achievement of all the LOs associated with each unit. The assessment tasks should allow the learner to respond to a real-life situation that they may face when in employment. On completion of each unit, learners must declare that the work produced is their own and the assessor must countersign this. Examples of suitable evidence for the portfolio for each unit are provided in section 2.

If a centre needs to create their own internal assessment tasks, there are five essential elements in the production of successful centre-based assessment tasks; these are:

- ensuring the assessment tasks are meaningful with clear, assessable outcomes
- appropriate coverage of the content, LOs or assessment criteria (AC)
- ensuring that safeguarding, equality, diversity and inclusion are considered in their task design
- having a valid and engaging context or scenario
- including sufficient opportunities for stretch and challenge for higher attainers

Assessment guidance is provided for each unit. Assessors can use other methods of assessment as long as they are valid and reliable and maintain the integrity of the assessment and of the standards required of this qualification.

Group and collaborative working

Where group working can be helpful for manageability, learner output and assessment **must** still be carried out on an individual basis. There is no scope for **group assessment** within qualifications.

Learners can collaborate to research/carry out preparatory work. Each learner must write up their own account of the task, using their own words, for example, this could be in the form of a self-reflection. Learners will be individually assessed against the criteria.

A centre can observe learners as a group, but each learner is required to have their own evidence in terms of what they produced for the task. An individual observation record should also be completed for each learner to clearly show what the learner did in the assessment and how they performed.

Where group tasks are appropriate, centres should make it clear how the groups are to be formed and give learners some autonomy in the formation of those groups where practical. If a cohort has an insufficient number of learners, then cohorts can be formed using mixed groups of learners or the role of learners can be performed by other appropriate adults.



Measures to ensure sufficient individual evidence is generated for assessment purposes:

- AC being evidenced are clear for each individual within the group
- clear role definition from the outset to align with the evidence required by each learner for the task
- encouraging the use of journals or logs to record progress and monitor contributions across the group
- training group members on carrying out fair and valid self and peer assessment
- use of peer assessment and self-assessment to evaluate their own and others' contributions
- ensuring appropriate supervision by the assessor

The assessor/quality assurer will need to be able to see how **each** learner being assessed has contributed and met the LOs.



Section 2: unit content and assessment guidance

This section provides details of the structure and content of this qualification.

The types of evidence listed are for guidance purposes only. Within learners' portfolios, other types of evidence are acceptable if all learning outcomes (LOs) are covered, and if the evidence generated can be internally and externally quality assured. For approval of methods of internal assessment other than portfolio building, please contact your external quality assurer (EQA).

The explanation of terms explains how the terms used in the unit content are applied to this qualification. This can be found in section 3.



Unit 01 Understand mental health for young children in the early years (H/651/2484)



Unit summary			
The aim of this unit is to raise an awareness of the significance of mental health for holistic health and wellbeing in children in the early years.			
Assessment			
This unit is internally assessed via a portfolio of evidence.			
Mandatory	Achieved/not yet achieved	Level 2	35 GLH

Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	Assessment criteria (AC) The learner can:
1. Understand holistic health and wellbeing for children in the early years	1.1 Define the following terms in the context of early years: - physical health - mental health - wellbeing
	1.2 Explain the relationship between physical and mental health for a child's holistic development and wellbeing
	1.3 Identify risk and protective factors that impact physical and mental health in the early years
2. Understand how children's mental health and wellbeing should be supported in early years provision	2.1 Explain how the statutory requirements in place support the welfare of children in the early years
	2.2 Use examples to describe how an enabling environment could be significant for physical and mental health and wellbeing
	2.3 Outline ways statutory guidance promotes mental health and wellbeing through an early years framework
	2.4 Describe the benefits of partnership working with the child's family to improve mental health and wellbeing in children
3. Understand the role of the key person in relation to physical and mental health and wellbeing	3.1 Describe the role of the key person in relation to physical and mental health and wellbeing
	3.2 Explain ways the key person supports children during transition
	3.3 Outline strategies and appropriate responses for intervention to support children's mental health
4. Understand mental health issues affecting children in early years	4.1 Describe indicators and signs of mental health concerns in children during the early years
	4.2 Describe the significance of mental wellness on later life chances and outcomes
	4.3 Identify steps to take as a practitioner in response to any mental health concerns in children in their early years

Range
1. Understand holistic health and wellbeing for children in the early years
1.3 Factors should include risk and protective factors such as:
Risk factors:
unrealistic expectations of the child by parents/others



Range
• effects of living in fear/anxiety • post-partum depression • parental stress • financial pressure • other health issues (for example, physical health, developmental delay, special educational needs and disability) Protective factors: • healthy parenting and family relationships • expectations and aspirations that are realistic
2. Understand how children's mental health and wellbeing should be supported in early years provision
2.1 Refer to statutory requirements in own country as appropriate. Useful supporting documentation will include the relationships, sex and health education curriculum (RSHE) within schools and criteria within the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) framework.
3. Understand the role of the key person in relation to physical and mental health and wellbeing
3.1 Key person: knowledge and understanding of the role to include working with key children, colleagues, parents/carers and other professionals, and the significance of the key person for children's holistic development, health and wellbeing. 3.3 Strategies to include but not limited to: • preventative approaches • reducing stigma/judgement • bias and discrimination • sign posting Early years practitioners must work in ways that boost esteem and confidence in babies and young children through child-centred experiences. It is crucial to establish and maintain positive relationships with key stakeholders (parents/carers, family members, care givers) in the child's life and communicate effectively. Practitioners must be able to signpost to other professionals to support children and families and always model best practice for child-centred education and care.
4. Understand mental health issues affecting children in early years
4.1 Indicators and signs to include, but not be limited to, anxiety, stress, depression, low self-esteem, poor self-regulation, or poor self-worth. 4.3 Mental health concerns to include, but not limited to, recognising, responding, understanding and taking action, early intervention, supporting and nurturing family relationships, supportive environments and networks, therapeutic interventions.



Delivery and assessment guidance

AC1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 4.2

Learners could produce a peer group display to raise awareness about physical and mental health in the early years. Learners could reflect on their group work and consider how physical and mental health in early years links with child development, wellbeing, future life chances and outcomes. They should consider a range of factors contributing to mental health and outline strategies for intervention in their reflection.

Suggested assessment methods:

- Display and written reflection

AC2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3.1, 4.3

Learners could research statutory requirements and guidance relating to supporting mental health and wellbeing in an early years setting. They could present their findings as guidance for early years practitioners to include how statutory guidance promotes children's welfare, mental health and wellbeing. Learners should also consider the role of the key person and the teaching and learning environment.

Suggested assessment methods:

- Create guidance

AC3.2, 3.3, 4.1

Tutors could design a series of case studies or scenarios demonstrating how the key person can support children's physical and mental health and wellbeing in different situations, including transitions. Learners should also consider signs and indicators that may raise concerns about a child's mental health. Tutors to supply scenario examples to support understanding.

Suggested assessment methods:

- Create guidance



Unit 02 The significance of attachment and adverse childhood experiences for young children in the early years (J/651/2485)

Unit summary			
The aim of this unit is to raise an awareness of the significance of attachment for mental health and wellbeing in children in the early years. This unit will also introduce relevant learning from neuroscience as well as appreciating the impact of adverse childhood experiences. Learning outcome (LO) 4 must be met through reflection of experience in an early years setting			
Assessment			
The unit is internally assessed via a portfolio of evidence.			
Mandatory	Achieved/not yet achieved	Level 2	35 GLH

Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	Assessment criteria (AC) The learner can:
1. Understand theory and approaches relevant to attachment in early years practice	1.1 Define the term 'attachment'
	1.2 Outline 'theory of attachment' in the context of early years practice
	1.3 Explain the impact of attachment theory for early years practice
	1.4 Describe how educational approaches support attachment in children in the early years
2. Understand the significance of attachment for mental health and wellbeing for children in the early years	2.1 Explain how attachment develops in the early years
	2.2 Describe factors impacting attachment in the early years
	2.3 Explain the significance of the primary carer for attachment in children in the early years
	2.4 Describe strategies to champion positive mental health in an early years setting
	2.5 Describe how children's mental health and wellbeing may be impacted by the absence of healthy attachments
3. Understand brain development and functioning in the context of mental health in children in the early years	3.1 Identify expected milestones for brain development from conception to birth
	3.2 Explain the impact of toxic stress for adverse childhood experiences
	3.3 Describe the significance of adverse childhood experiences for children's future mental health
4. Be able to recognise mental health concerns in children and respond appropriately	4.1 Use examples to describe the terms 'co-regulation' and 'self-regulation'
	4.2 Facilitate experiences and opportunities to promote self-regulation in daily practice



Delivery and assessment guidance

AC1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4

Tutors could devise a series of assessment tasks and/or questions to meet the AC. Learners could then research attachment theory and educational approaches within the context of early years practice, using relevant sources, and use their findings to complete the assignment tasks.

Suggested assessment method:

- Assignment

AC2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5, 4.2

Learners could research the significance of attachment for mental health and wellbeing in the early years. This should include how attachment develops, factors impacting attachment and the importance of healthy attachments with primary carers.

Learners may give suggestions on how to respond to mental health concerns in children, demonstrating how they could facilitate experiences and opportunities to promote self-regulation in daily practice.

Suggested assessment method:

- Presentation

AC3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 2.4

Learners could complete tutor-devised questions to address early development of the brain and the impact of toxic stress and adverse childhood experiences in relation to mental health.

Learners may discuss strategies to champion positive mental health in an early years setting.

Suggested assessment method-Question and answer

Simulation is not permitted for this qualification, however, as the skills-based outcomes do not require direct observation, learners are able to reflect on their experiences within their settings in order to meet these outcomes.



Unit 03 The role of the Early Years Practitioner supporting mental health and wellbeing for young children in the early years (K/651/2486)

Unit summary			
The aim of this unit is to increase confidence amongst early years practitioners to support early intervention for mental health and wellbeing in children in the early years. Learning outcome (LO) 4 must be met through reflection of experience in an early years setting			
Assessment			
The unit is internally assessed via a portfolio of evidence.			
Mandatory	Achieved/not yet achieved	Level 2	35 GLH

Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	Assessment criteria (AC) The learner can:
1. Understand the role of communication for children's mental health and wellbeing	1.1 Identify different communication methods for speech, language and communication with children in early years 1.2 Explain how effective communication contributes to positive mental health and wellbeing of children
2. Understand the role of the practitioner to promote mental health and wellbeing in an early years setting	2.1 Explain how mental health and wellbeing can be supported through activities and experiences with young children 2.2 Describe policies and procedures in place to support mental health in children in an early years setting 2.3 Explain resilience building strategies for early intervention to support mental health and wellbeing in an early years setting 2.4 Describe the role of co-regulation for self-regulation 2.5 Describe the need for the practitioner to understand the relationship between behaviour and mental health
3. Understand sources of support for children, families and practitioners	3.1 Outline sources of support for: - child - parent/primary carer and family - setting - self 3.2 Outline the role of professionals, agencies and services that can support children's mental health
4. Be able to work in partnership with professionals to support positive mental health and wellbeing in children	4.1 Work effectively with others involved in the education and care of children with mental health concerns 4.2 Champion positive mental health in an early years setting for holistic health and wellbeing

Range
3. Understand sources of support for children, families and practitioners
3.1 Sources of support to include support for parents/carers/families living with mental health issues, including but not limited to lifestyle choice.



Delivery and assessment guidance

AC1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.3

Learners could plan or design a series of activities, strategies and resources to be used to support mental health and wellbeing in the early years. Learners should consider a range of different strategies, activities and experiences that would support communication, resilience building and self-regulation in early years practice. Examples of resources could include games, stories, props and other relevant items. Learners will also need to provide information about how each activity, strategy or resource would develop relationships and support communication, resilience building and mental health and wellbeing.

Suggested assessment method:

- Resource pack

AC1.2, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2

Learners could produce a factsheet relating to supporting mental health in an early years setting. This factsheet could be used to inform key people and early years practitioners about the setting's policies and procedures, sources of support and the roles of different professionals, agencies and services for children's mental health.

Suggested assessment method:

- Factsheet

AC2.4, 2.5, 4.1

Learners could research the role of co-regulation in supporting children with self-regulation, and the need for the practitioner to understand the relationship between behaviour and mental health. They could use their research to complete a tutor-devised assignment designed to address the assessment criteria.

Learners discuss the effective collaboration with others involved in the education and care of children with mental health concerns.

Suggested assessment method:

- Assignment

AC1.2

The learner must be confidently able to communicate in ways that support children with mental health concerns including with other professionals.

AC3.2

The learner must have the knowledge and understanding to confidently liaise with other professionals and be able to facilitate collaboration with other professionals as appropriate

Simulation is not permitted for this qualification, however, as the skills-based outcomes do not require



Delivery and assessment guidance

direct observation, learners are able to reflect on their experiences within their settings in order to meet these outcomes.



NCFE assessment strategy

The key requirements of the assessment strategies or principles that relate to units in this qualification are summarised below.

The centre must ensure that individuals undertaking assessor or quality assurer roles within the centre conform to the assessment requirements for the unit they are assessing or quality assuring.

Knowledge LOs

- assessors will need to be both occupationally knowledgeable and qualified to make assessment decisions
- internal quality assurers (IQAs) will need to be both occupationally knowledgeable and qualified to make quality assurance decisions

Competence/skills LOs

- assessors will need to be both occupationally competent and qualified to make assessment decisions
- IQAs will need to be both occupationally knowledgeable and qualified to make quality assurance decisions

The centre with whom the learners are registered will be responsible for making all assessment decisions. Assessors must be **contracted** to work directly with the centre, contributing to all aspects of standardisation. The centre must ensure a process of training is followed, including during induction and quality assurance activities. Occupationally competent and qualified assessors from the centre must use direct observation to assess practical skills-based outcomes.



Section 3: explanation of terms

This table explains how the terms used at **level 2** in the unit content are applied to this qualification (not all verbs are used in this qualification).

Apply	Link existing knowledge to new or different situations.
Assess	Consider information in order to make decisions.
Classify	Organise according to specific criteria.
Compare	Examine the subjects in detail looking at similarities and differences.
Define	State the meaning of a word or phrase.
Demonstrate	Show an understanding of the subject or how to apply skills in a practical situation.
Describe	Write about the subject giving detailed information.
Differentiate	Give the differences between two or more things.
Discuss	Write an account giving more than one view or opinion.
Distinguish	Show or recognise the difference between items/ideas/information.
Estimate	Give an approximate decision or opinion using previous knowledge.
Explain	Provide details about the subject with reasons showing how or why. Some responses could include examples.
Give (positive and negative points)	Provide information showing the advantages and disadvantages of the subject.
Identify	List or name the main points. (Some description may also be necessary to gain higher marks when using compensatory marking).
Illustrate	Give clear information using written examples, pictures or diagrams.
List	Make a list of key words, sentences or comments that focus on the subject.
Perform	Do something (take an action/follow an instruction) that the question or task asks or requires.
Plan	Think about and organise information in a logical way. This could be presented as written information, a diagram, an illustration or other suitable format.
Provide	Give relevant information about a subject.
Reflect	Learners should look back on their actions, experiences or learning and think about how this could inform their future practice.



Select	Choose for a specific purpose.
Show	Supply sufficient evidence to demonstrate knowledge and understanding.
State	Give the main points clearly in sentences.
Use	Take or apply an item, resource or piece of information as asked in the question or task.



Section 4: support

Support materials

The following support materials are available to assist with the delivery of this qualification and are available on the NCFE website:

- Qualification Factsheet
- Sample Assessment Materials

Other support materials

The resources and materials used in the delivery of this qualification must be age-appropriate and due consideration should be given to the wellbeing and safeguarding of learners in line with your institute's safeguarding policy when developing or selecting delivery materials.

Products to support the delivery of this qualification may be available. For more information about these resources and how to access them, please visit the NCFE website.

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Contact us

NCFE
Q6
Quorum Park
Benton Lane
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE12 8BT

Tel: 0191 239 8000*
Fax: 0191 239 8001
Email: customersupport@ncfe.org.uk
Website: www.ncfe.org.uk

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Version 1.1 November 2025

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Appendix A: units

To simplify cross-referencing assessments and quality assurance, we have used a sequential numbering system in this document for each unit.

 Knowledge-only units are indicated by a star. If a unit is not marked with a star, it is a skills unit or contains a mix of knowledge and skills.

Mandatory units



Unit number	Regulated unit number	Unit title	Level	GLH	Notes
Unit 01	H/651/2484	Understand mental health for young children in the early years	2	35	
Unit 02	J/651/2485	The significance of attachment and adverse childhood experiences for young children in the early years	2	35	
Unit 03	K/651/2486	The role of the Early Years Practitioner supporting mental health and wellbeing for young children in the early years	2	35	

The units above may be available as stand-alone unit programmes. Please visit the NCFE website for further information.



Change history record

Version	Publication date	Description of change
V1.0	August 2025	First publication
V1.1	November 2025	Information added to 'Internal assessment' section on page 6 around consideration for safeguarding, equality, diversity and inclusion when devising tasks and new guidance added on 'Group and collaborative working'.