



Qualification Specification



Qualification summary

Qualification title	NCFE CACHE Level 2 Technical Specialist in Early Years Nutrition (Award)
Ofqual qualification number (QN)	610/4517/2
Guided learning hours (GLH)	40
Total qualification time (TQT)	50
Minimum age	16
Qualification purpose	This qualification is designed for early years practitioners working with babies and young children. The qualification will build on existing knowledge and skills of nutrition and hydration through specialist duties for improved outcomes in an early years setting.
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 in an early years setting to be able to meet the assessment requirements of this qualification.
Occupational standards	<p>This qualification builds on the outcomes within the Early Years Practitioner occupational standard (ST0888).</p> <p>The specialist duties have been written to build upon the knowledge, skills and behaviours in the Early Years Practitioner standard.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Identifies the nutritional requirements of children at different ages and stages of development2. Explains the benefits of good nutrition and hydration in an early years setting3. Obtains information about children's special dietary requirements, preferences or food allergies4. Plans balanced menus, appropriate to children's different dietary requirements and food allergies5. Promotes good nutrition and hydration in an early years setting6. Adheres to the hygienic preparation and handling of food in an early years setting7. Informs parents and carers of any nutrition-related concerns
Regulation information	This is a regulated qualification. The regulated number for this qualification is 610/4517/2.
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:

- raise an awareness of the nutrition and hydration requirements of babies and young children in an early years setting

The objectives of this qualification are to:

- implement statutory guidance for nutrition and hydration
- meet the dietary requirements of individual babies and children
- plan balanced and healthy meals and snacks
- appreciate the health and safety requirements when providing nutrition and hydration for babies and children

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 early years practitioners and early years educators. This qualification builds on the outcomes within the Early Years Practitioner occupational standard (ST0888).

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

Learners must be aged 16 or above to undertake this qualification and be working within an early years setting. It would also be advantageous for the learner to hold a relevant level 2 qualification.

Centres are responsible for ensuring that all learners are capable of achieving the 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 **both** 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.

Age range covered by the qualification

This qualification relates to working with children in early years settings, from birth to 5 years of age for early years practitioners.

Progression

Learners who achieve this qualification could progress to the following:

- employment:
 - early years nutrition leader
 - family partner
- further education:
 - early years
 - teaching and learning
 - health and social care

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.

Realistic work environment (RWE) recommendation

The assessment of competence-based criteria should ideally be conducted within the workplace. However, in instances where this is not feasible, learners can be assessed in a realistic work environment (RWE) designed to replicate real work settings.

It is essential for organisations utilising an RWE to ensure it accurately reflects current and authentic work environments. By doing so, employers can be confident that competence demonstrated by a learner in an RWE will be translated into successful performance in employment.

In establishing an RWE, the following factors should be considered.



The work situation being represented is relevant to the competence requirements being assessed:

- the work situation should closely resemble the relevant setting
- equipment and resources that replicate the work situation must be current and available for use to ensure that assessment requirements can be met
- time constraints, resource access and information availability should mirror real conditions

The learner's work activities reflect those found in the work environment being represented, for example:

- interaction with colleagues and others should reflect expected communication approaches
- tasks performed must be completed to an acceptable timescale
- learners must be able to achieve a realistic volume of work as would be expected in the work situation being represented
- learners operate professionally with clear understanding of their work activities and responsibilities
- feedback from colleagues and others (for example customers, service users) is maintained and acted upon
- account must be taken of any legislation, regulations or standard procedures that would be followed in the workplace

Work/industry placement experience

The learner must be working within an early years 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 Level 2 Technical Specialist in Early Years Nutrition (Award).

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

We have created some sample tasks for the two internally assessed units, which can be found within a separate document in the member's area of the NCFE website. These tasks are not mandatory. You can contextualise these tasks to suit the needs of your learners to help them build up their portfolio of evidence. The tasks have been designed to cover some LOs for two units and provide opportunities for stretch and challenge. For further information about contextualising the tasks, please contact the Provider Development team.

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

It is expected that centre-devised tasks are reviewed by the centre and are comparable to both industry standards and standardised across centres. This will reduce predictability.

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 Nutrition for babies and children in an early years setting (L/651/2487)

Unit summary			
In this unit the learner will explain what constitutes a healthy, balanced diet, describe the benefits of healthy nutrition and hydration and outline the potential impact of poor nutrition in the short- and long-term for babies and young children. Learners will also know the importance of food labelling, how a healthy, balanced diet may support cognitive skills in children and outline special dietary requirements, including allergies and intolerance, in babies and children. They will also explain ways early years practitioners could promote the benefits of health nutrition in an inclusive and sensitive way and demonstrate sustainable practices when promoting nutrition and hydration.			
Assessment			
This unit is internally assessed and externally quality assured via a portfolio of evidence.			
Mandatory	Achieved/not yet achieved	Level 2	20 GLH

Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	Assessment criteria (AC) The learner can:
1. Understand healthy, balanced diets for babies and children from birth to 5 years of age	1.1 Explain what constitutes a healthy, balanced diet
	1.2 Describe the benefits of healthy nutrition and hydration for babies and children in an early years setting
	1.3 Outline the potential impact of poor nutrition on the short- and long-term development of babies and young children
	1.4 State the relevant areas of statutory guidance that inform food and drink nutrition and oral health for babies and children
	1.5 Explain the importance of food labelling
	1.6 Describe how a healthy, balanced diet may support cognitive skills in children
2. Know about healthy eating and hydration to meet the dietary needs of individual babies and children in an early years setting	2.1 Refer to statutory guidance to explain food and drink nutrition for babies and children from birth to 5 years of age
	2.2 Outline special dietary requirements , including common allergies and intolerances in babies and children
	2.3 Identify signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction to food and drink
	2.4 Explain how to respond to allergic reactions to food and drink, including record keeping
3. Be able to promote healthy nutrition and hydration in an early years setting	3.1 Explain ways an early years practitioner could promote the benefits of good nutrition and hydration in an inclusive and sensitive way with parents/carers
	3.2 Demonstrate sustainable practices when promoting nutrition and hydration

**Range****1. Understand healthy, balanced diets for babies and children from birth to 5 years of age****1.2 Nutrition and hydration for babies and children**

The learner must consider:

- breast/bottle
- establishing solid food
- giving attention to portion size
- birth to 6 months
- 6 to 12 months
- 1 to 5 years

1.4 Oral health

The learner must consider:

- sugar as a factor in oral health
- drinks in non-spill trainer cups
- feeding from a pouch
- brushing teeth

1.5 Food labelling

The learner must consider:

- ingredients list
- nutritional information
- food and drink warning
- best before/use-by date
- storage information
- cooking instructions
- age-appropriate food

1.6 Cognitive skills

The learner must consider:

- attentiveness
- concentration
- behaviour
- motivation
- contribution
- participation and cognitive skills impacted by physical health and wellbeing



Range
2. Know about healthy eating and hydration to meet the dietary needs of individual babies and children in an early years setting
2.2 Special dietary requirements The learner must consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• medical restrictions• religious restrictions• cultural traditions• allergies and intolerances• preference• support and guidance of a dietician as appropriate• special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
3. Be able to promote healthy nutrition and hydration in an early years setting
3.1 Inclusive and sensitive way The learner must consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SEND and dietary requirements• financial pressure• parent's/carer's understanding of nutrition and hydration
3.2 Sustainable practices The learner must consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• sourcing food• discussing healthy food choices• portion size• food waste• composting

**Delivery and assessment guidance**

AC1.1 Learners must consider what constitutes a healthy, balanced diet and how that would be adapted for an early years setting. Learners could refer to the following websites:

- [Eat well](#)
- [Healthier families](#)
- [What to feed young children](#)
- [Breastfeeding: the first few days](#)
- [Healthy eating: applying All our Health](#)

AC1.2 Early years setting refers to children from birth to 5 years. Teaching and learning must make reference to breast and bottle feeding. Learners must know about the benefits of breastfeeding whilst appreciating parental circumstance and choice. Discussion with learners around breast and bottle feeding should consider these features. Learners must know about approaches for babies when moving on to solid foods. Learners must be aware of the changing nutritional requirements of babies and young children as well as considering sensory experiences during weaning. Discussions around homemade and bought foods and the importance of developing weaning with savoury foods must take place.

Learners could refer to the following websites:

- [What to feed young children](#)
- [Breastfeeding: the first few days](#)
- [The Processed Cereal-based Foods and Baby Foods for Infants and Young Children \(England\) Regulations 2003](#)
- [UK Health Security Agency](#)
- [Office for Health Improvement & Disparities](#)
- [Scientific Advisory Committee on nutrition \(SACN\)](#)

AC1.3 Learners must give a minimum of four examples: two relating to the short-term impact of poor nutrition and two relating to the long-term impact of poor nutrition.

AC1.4 Learners must use reliable sources of online information. Learners could refer to the following websites:

- [Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework](#)
- [School food standards practical guide](#)
- [What to feed young children](#)

AC1.5 Learners must consider nutritional information on food labels including hidden sugar, high salt content and additives in savoury foods.

AC2.2 Learners could refer to the following website:

- [Food allergies in babies and young children](#)

AC2.3 Learners could refer to the following website:

- [anaphylaxis UK](#)



Delivery and assessment guidance

AC2.4 Early years professionals should maintain accurate records of babies' and children's known allergies through communication with parents and families. All records must be stored securely but be accessible to all staff to ensure individual needs are met. Not all allergies are known, so early years staff must remain vigilant at snack and mealtimes as this is a potential high risk. Early years professionals need to know the signs and symptoms of allergic reactions.

AC3.1 Learners could consider the concerns that an early years practitioner may have about a child who is not being supported to maintain a healthy diet.

AC3.2 Learners could refer to the following websites:

- [UNICEF and the Sustainable Development Goals](#)
- [Tackling obesity: government strategy](#)
- [Advice for parents of healthy-weight children](#)



Unit 02 Promoting food and drink nutrition in an early years setting (M/651/2488)

Unit summary			
<p>In this unit the learner will be able to plan snacks and meals to meet food and drink requirements for babies and children from birth to 5 years. They will be able to share snack and meal plans with others and evaluate their effectiveness. Learners will also know policies and procedures to follow to meet the individual dietary needs of babies and children and be able to outline health and safety measures to follow when preparing and storing food. Learners will also be able to demonstrate correct handwashing techniques and outline the role of an early years practitioner to keep babies and children safe when eating and drinking. They will also be able to plan, prepare and provide healthy meals and snacks for children, explain the reasons for food choices and combinations, and reflect on their own role and make recommendations for improved practices.</p>			
Assessment			
This unit is internally assessed and externally quality assured via a portfolio of evidence.			
Mandatory	Achieved/not yet achieved	Level 2	20 GLH

Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	Assessment criteria (AC) The learner can:
1. Be able to plan nutritious snacks and meals for babies and children	1.1 Plan snacks and meals to meet food and drink requirements for babies and children from birth to 5 years, taking into account any special dietary requirements
	1.2 Share daily snack and meal plans with others
	1.3 Evaluate the effectiveness of daily snack and meal plans to meet the food and drink requirements of babies and children
2. Know about policies and procedures to follow when preparing food and drink in an early years setting	2.1 Describe policies and procedures followed to meet the individual dietary needs of babies and children in line with statutory requirements
	2.2 Outline health and safety measures followed when preparing and storing food
	2.3 Explain the importance of hygienic practice during food preparation
3. Be able to prepare and provide healthy snacks and meals in an early years setting	3.1 Demonstrate correct handwashing techniques
	3.2 Outline the role of an early years practitioner to keep babies and young children safe when eating and drinking
	3.3 Plan, prepare and provide a healthy meal or snack for children
	3.4 Explain reasons for food choices and combinations for a healthy meal or snack for children
	3.5 Reflect on own role and make recommendations for improved practice



Range
1. Be able to plan nutritious snacks and meals for babies and children
1.1 Special dietary requirements The learner must consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• medical restrictions• religious restrictions• cultural traditions• allergies and intolerances• preference• support and guidance of a dietician as appropriate• special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
1.2 Others The learner must consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• parent/carer• tutor/assessor• other professionals
2. Know about policies and procedures to follow when preparing food and drink in an early years setting
2.2 Health and safety measures The learner must consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• food handling• food storage• storage temperatures• hygiene practices



Delivery and assessment guidance

AC2.1 Learners must refer to an organisational policy.

AC2.2 Learners must refer to their organisation's policies and procedures for managing special diets.

AC3.2 Learners must know the signs and action to take when a child is choking. Learners could refer to the following website:

- [How to stop a child from choking](#)

AC3.3 Learners must encourage healthy eating for all children, considering the eating environment, portion sizes and those that may be fussy eaters.

AC3.4 Learners must provide a rationale to explain their choices. Learners could refer to the following websites:

- [Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework](#)
- [School food standards practical guide](#)
- [Eat well](#)
- [Better Health: healthier families \(NHS\)](#)
- [What to feed young children](#)
- [Childhood obesity: applying All our Health](#)

AC3.5 Learners must reflect upon their own practice and how it could be improved.



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.

For this qualification, the centre must use the further information relating to adult care, childcare and health principles, which can be found within the mandatory Support Handbook.



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:

- Sample Assessment Tasks
- Qualification Factsheet

Useful websites

Centres may find the following websites helpful for information, materials and resources to assist with the delivery of this qualification:

- [Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework](#)
- [School food standards practical guide](#)
- [What to feed young children](#)
- [Food allergies in babies and young children](#)
- [UNICEF and the Sustainable Development Goals](#)
- [Tackling obesity: government strategy](#)
- [Advice for parents of healthy-weight children](#)
- [Eating well in the early years](#)
- [Eat well](#)
- [Healthier families](#)
- [How to stop a child from choking](#)
- [British Nutrition Foundation](#)
- [First Steps Nutrition Trust](#)
- [Anaphylaxis UK](#)
- [Allergy UK](#)
- [Eat Better, Start Better](#)
- [Example menus for early years settings in England](#)
- [The Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years Settings](#)
- [Food for infants and young children](#)

These links are provided as sources of potentially useful information for delivery/learning of this subject area. NCFE does not explicitly endorse these websites or any learning resources available on these websites. For official NCFE-endorsed learning resources, please see the additional and teaching materials sections on the qualification's page on the NCFE website.

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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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
Unit 01	L/651/2487	Nutrition for babies and children in an early years setting	2	20
Unit 02	M/651/2488	Promoting food and drink nutrition in an early years setting	2	20

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Information added to 'Internal assessment' section around consideration for safeguarding, equality, diversity and inclusionAdditional section added: 'Group and collaborative working'