

**Are you interested in early
education and childcare as a
career?**

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Are you interested in a career working with young children and their families? Do you have a passion for nurturing young children, supporting their early learning and providing play activities that enable them to explore and develop? If you do, then early years could be the career for you!



Early Years workers enjoy working with children, they are nurturing, caring and have a genuine interest in each individual child's wellbeing, development and early learning through play. They take a pride in children's achievements and encourage them to flourish and grow. They play an integral role in helping them develop through fun activities. As a practitioner, you will laugh, smile, and your day might be just as fun for you as it is for the children. Furthermore, you will have the immense satisfaction of seeing children develop skills and knowledge that they will use throughout their entire lives!

From the moment a baby is born they are actively learning about themselves and the world around them. Each child is unique with different needs and research confirms that the first five years of children's lives are the most important period for laying the foundations for their learning and ongoing development. If active minds are nurtured in safe enabling environments and young children have access to high quality early years experiences they will do better in later life and the difficult transition into school can be much easier.

Early Childhood covers the period 0-8 and Early Education and Childcare settings provide services for children from birth to 5. You can work in places like day nurseries, maintained and independent schools or as a registered childminder or home child carer (nanny). Working in Early Education and Childcare opens up a career path full of opportunities within a range of roles. You may start your career working in a setting as a practitioner. You may take on specific leadership, management or specialist roles within the setting or choose to develop your career and pursue further academic study or employment routes in schools or become a teacher, lecturer, social worker or even a speech and language specialist. You may decide to become self-employed.

A career in Early Education and Childcare is the chance to support young children as they learn, develop and prepare for school. It's a career path that is rewarding, full of variety and offers progression and different pathways to follow as you grow in experience and confidence.



Those working in early years are committed practitioners that enjoy their work, reflect on the impact of their engagement with children and take responsibility for improving on what they do through regular participation in their own professional development.

It does not matter where you are in starting a career, in early years there is a range of entry points.

The Department for Education (DfE) has implemented something called the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework. This framework determines how childcare providers must deliver services. The EYFS provides practitioners with a structure for supporting children's development and is part of compulsory framework for children from 0-5 in both childcare and formal educational settings (school) thorough to the end of their reception year.



What skills and qualities do I need?

When you are considering a career in early years it is important for you to understand the skills and qualities required for working with babies and young children. People who pursue careers in this area need to have the right kind of skills and qualities; including:

- Being an active listener
- A good communicator
- Transparent and trustworthy
- Caring
- Empathetic
- Patient
- Respectful
- Observant
- Inclusive
- Encouraging
- Imaginative
- Creative
- Flexibility
- Commitment
- Reliable
- Responsible
- Have a good sense of humour
- Motivation
- Hard working
- Ability to work as part of a team
- ... and above all professional.



Safeguarding our youngest children is essential, so the first priority for any childcare employer is to check that those starting work in early years are suited to working with children. Before starting, everyone working with children must have an enhanced Disclosing and Barring Service check (DBS) and must disclose if they are living with anyone that is barred from working with children. Employers will also obtain references and ensure that new recruits are satisfactory before allowing them to work with children unsupervised. Most people working in early years will need a paediatric first aid certificate. You will also be required to have knowledge of safeguarding policies and procedures and your employer will support you to do this.

Training

Childcare can involve working with children of all ages, from babies and toddlers, to older pre-school children. You might start your career as a nursery assistant without any qualifications, but training and studying for level 2 or level 3 qualifications will allow you to progress and become a qualified nursery worker. From there, you might even be able to progress into supervisory and managerial roles. There are different types of training and qualifications you can undertake such as work based training, apprenticeships (a job with training) and college/university courses – your local college or training provider/university will be able to provide further information.

Childcare – types of employment

Careers within early years can vary greatly depending on the size and type of setting you work in; some might be small, private centres with only 20 or so children, whilst other larger chains. They might be run by private companies, community organisations, or be linked to a school.

If you are working in a **day nursery** you will be helping children from birth to 4 to develop and learn. You could work in a **privately owned nursery, a maintained setting run by your local authority or a school offering childcare**. Many private settings open from 8am to 6pm (or even longer) all year round to accommodate the needs of working parents, so you will need to be able to be flexible. Due to the long opening hours many private setting operate shifts to cover early starts and late finishes. Some maintained childcare settings operate in the same way; however, some may open term time only or open for shorter hours during the day.

Settings in schools are often called **pre-schools** and this can mean that they are not caring and educating children of all ages. Pre-schools could mean you are caring for and educating children between 2 and 4 (or five dependent on the structure of the setting). Pre-schools often open for sessions e.g. morning and/or afternoons and some may have lunch clubs.

Playgroups are often organised by community or voluntary groups and run from community centres, church halls or even out of a school. Opening times for childcare will vary dependant on the setting. Many playgroup settings open for 3 hour sessions.

Play work, including out of school clubs, can include breakfast clubs, after school clubs or holiday play schemes. Within these roles you could be working in a school, community centre or leisure centre. The role of a play worker is very active and can be very varied. This role might involve working with children and young people aged between 4 and 13 (maybe even up to 16 in some instances) and is mostly early morning, evening, during school holiday and weekend work.

A **crèche** provides children with a safe place to play whilst their parents engaged in short term activity. This could be training, in a sports facility, working very short hours or even shopping. The age range of children can vary within this type of work. There are a range of opportunities for working in a crèche e.g. within gyms, at shopping centres or you might join a company that has their own internal crèche for staff. Crèche sessions normally only last for around one to two hours but they may offer more than one session per day.

Registered **childminders** are self-employed and run their own business. They work on domestic premises, often from home, and are flexible in their working hours. Childminders must be registered with Ofsted, and the number of children they are legally permitted to care for will depend on the age of the children and the space available. Dependent on the hours a childminder chooses to work, there are opportunities to offer daytime, evening, weekend and overnight care if this is what a parent needs. Childminders can also employ assistants to enable them to increase the number of children in their setting. You may wish to consider becoming a childminding assistant rather than being an independent registered childminder.

Registered home carers or **nannies** work in the home of the parent or carers who are their employer. Nannies are responsible for all aspects of childcare and duties will vary dependant on the age range and number of children they are required to care for. Whilst some nannies live in with their employer (family), others live out.

Childcare is an exciting rewarding career and as you can see there are plenty of routes available for people who want to work with children.

Whether you are considering a career in childcare or you are already a childcare professional working in the sector, we would like you to be inspired and get involved with the Inspiring A Future in Childcare campaign. Led by Tinies Childcare, the campaign has support from across the sector, and is endorsed by the DfE.

Through the campaign, key organisations across the Early Years sector are collaborating to raise awareness of the value of childcare professionals to society, and to promote the variety and large number of jobs that exist in the sector.

A partnership with the charity Education and Employers is enabling the campaign to engage early years professionals with schools in their community through the Inspiring The Future volunteering platform. Have you volunteered in your area?

Please click [here](#) for more information.