

## About early years careers

The early years sector offers clear steps to help you grow your skills, confidence and career. The path you choose will depend on your skills, qualifications and interests and may change over time.

Follow the journey on the next page to see how you could progress your career in a nursery or pre-school, as a teacher, or as a childminder.

### Getting started

Start at this point if you are new to working with small children and looking to begin a career in early years education.

### Build your experience

If you already have early years experience or a qualification and want more responsibility, explore the roles and progression routes under this heading.

### Lead & manage

If you're an experienced professional, ready to lead teams and manage settings, see the types of roles and career progression available at this point on the path.

## Ready to get started?

To apply for a role, or to get information on your potential career path, visit [gov.uk/early-years-careers](https://gov.uk/early-years-careers)

### Check your qualifications



To make sure your qualifications are Department for Education-approved, use the QR code to try the 'early years qualifications checker' or search online.



UK Government

## Grow their future, and yours

### Start your career in early years education

A career in early years education means being part of hundreds of little ones' lives, helping to give them the best start in life.

Whether you're just starting out, switching careers or looking to progress, there's a role for you working with children under five.



Do something BIG  
Work with  
small children



Early  
Years  
Careers

# Getting started

There are many routes into early years. Some roles don't need qualifications, but they are valued by most employers and are key for career growth. You can study before starting work or get qualified on the job.

## Get qualified while you work

Earn while you learn with a Level 2, Level 3 or Level 6 early years apprenticeship. From £15K - £25K salary

## Set up & register as a childminder

Register with Ofsted or a childminder agency to start your own early education and childcare business from home or a local space. From £20K - 30K+ salary

## Get a qualification at school, college or university

Learn in a classroom with practical elements and gain an approved qualification to start as a qualified member of staff.

## Work in an unqualified role

Some early years roles allow you to work unqualified. From £16K - 20K salary

## Already qualified?

Search for early years vacancies or explore childminding opportunities on our website.

gain experience, and progress...

## Level 3 and above

You need at least a Level 3 qualification to manage or lead teams.

# Build your experience

No matter where you start, there are many ways to grow your experience and build your career, by specialising or gaining seniority.

Run your own room, plan engaging and educational activities and support colleagues. From £20K - 30K+ salary

## Lead a room

## Specialise in an area

Unlock specialist roles like mentor, safeguarding lead, or Special Educational Needs Coordinator. From £20K - 30K+ salary

## Get more senior roles

With experience and a level 3 early years qualification, you can progress into senior roles with more responsibility.

## Run your own business

Team up with other childminders, or open your own setting. Increase your scale and offer more childcare places.

## Become an early years teacher

Design and deliver the curriculum, coach others in their development, and act as family liaison. From £25K - 50K salary

# Lead & manage

As your experience grows, you could consider leading and managing teams or settings or even starting your own business.

## Manage a team

Guide staff, shape the curriculum and lead others in their careers. From £30K - 50K+ salary

## Grow as a childminder

Grow your business by hiring an assistant, offering more childcare places, or gaining more qualifications. From £20K - 40K+ salary

advance further!

## Qualifications in early years explained

There is a range of government-approved early years qualifications out there. Each one will develop your knowledge and help you progress your career. Find the right qualification to suit your needs.

## Level 2

Equivalent to GCSEs, you don't need any experience to start, and it allows you to work in a setting under supervision e.g. as a nursery assistant.

## Level 3

Equivalent to A Levels or above and suitable for those who want to plan, organise, and lead learning activities and supervise other team members.

## Level 6

Gain Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) or Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) through a degree to become a teacher. You don't need experience, but you'll need some GCSEs.

## Launching in 2026

Our new Level 6 degree apprenticeship.