

# **NORTHERN IRELAND QUALIFICATION AUDIT - REGISTERED GROUP BASED CHILDCARE**

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Authors

**Jenny Adair and  
Mairead McMullen**



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# 1. Context and introduction

Across the UK and Europe, childcare has become recognised for its contribution across a range of social and economic policy agendas and its role in stimulating economic growth, addressing poverty, supporting neighborhood regeneration and supporting social inclusion.

In England and Wales, the Childcare Act (2006) places a statutory duty on local authorities to ensure there is sufficient childcare provision in their area to meet the needs of local working parents.

In Northern Ireland, while the provision of childcare to children in need is a statutory requirement placed upon Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts by the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, there is no legislation which requires sufficient childcare to be provided to the wider population.

From an economic perspective, childcare impacts at individual, family and societal levels by enabling parents to enter, re-enter or remain active within the labour market enhancing individual earning potential, thereby contributing to the eradication of family poverty and supporting social mobility.

Within the childcare sector in Northern Ireland, excellent practice exists across all types of provision delivered by early years and childcare practitioners with a wide range of qualifications and experience.

The increase in qualification levels in the early years and childcare workforce has happened organically over many years through the support of programmes such as those listed below:

- Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) Bursary Scheme;
- Department for the Economy (DfE) Bursary Scheme;
- Peace and Reconciliation Funding;
- Department of Health (DOH) Office of Social Services Bursary Scheme;
- DfE Apprenticeship Programme;
- DOH Minimum Standards for Childminding and Day-Care for children aged 0-12 years; and
- The commitment and dedication of early years and childcare practitioners supported by employers to develop themselves as professionals and to raise the quality of practice.

Evidence suggests that high quality education and care in the early years has a positive impact on the outcomes for young children. According to Bonetti and Blanden (2020) qualification levels of staff are considered one of the key elements of structural quality in early years provision.

Sylva et al (2004) would further suggest that a well-qualified, well educated workforce is essential to high quality provision, which in turn is crucial in giving young children the best possible opportunities for learning and development.

Cathy Nutbrown (2012) noted; “Good qualifications, taught well, ensure that those training to enter the early years workforce, and those already working with babies and young children, can be supported to develop the right blend of theoretical knowledge and practical skills. When these are combined with the commitment and passion evident across the sector we can expect to see better outcomes for children, in the early years phase and in their later life as well.”

In (2021) Nutbrown also notes qualifications are not simply ‘a piece of paper’ or a ‘hoop to jump through’ to obtain a particular job-role in early childhood education and care. A qualification should stand as evidence of what early childhood educators know and can do, and in particular how they can support young children’s learning through highly attuned practice and thoughtful reflection.

In Northern Ireland, the Department of Health (DOH) Minimum Standards for Childminding and Daycare for Children Under Age 12 (July 2012) aim to ensure the safety and well-being of children through a consistent level of quality and a regional approach to registration and inspection. Section 2 within the Minimum Standards document outlines the requirements relating to the quality of staffing, management and leadership.

The Health and Social Care Board issued implementation guidance for registered sessional, full daycare and childminding services in October 2017 with the endorsement of the Department of Health and others including HSC Trusts, regional childcare sector representative organisations and other stakeholders to promote shared interpretation of the Minimum Standards. [Click here for the Implementation Guidance Sessional & Full Day Care](#)

Given the range of qualifications acquired by new entrants to the childcare sector, one of the on-going challenges for HSC Trusts is to identify which ones are acceptable or equivalent to those identified within the Minimum Standards and the associated Implementation Guidance.

Nutbrown (2021) identifies that in England the Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC) assessed many of the qualifications to determine which can be

considered “full and relevant”, and therefore can count towards the minimum ratio of qualified staff in any group setting.

Nutbrown (2021) in her review of the qualification landscape in England 2012 noted that:

“The early years qualification picture is over-complicated, with significant doubts over whether the content of courses covers both the skills and knowledge that people need to work in the sector. There are literally hundreds of early years education and childcare qualifications, many of which are no longer taught but are nonetheless held by many practitioners and deemed acceptable. The variation in the content of qualifications is significant, and presents real problems to students trying to understand what to study and employers considering suitable applicants for jobs.” Northern Ireland has a similar challenge.

Emerging evidence in child development, neuroscience, attachment theories and family-specific attitudes or abilities to support children's learning and development needs to be reflected in course content. Therefore, the qualification landscape needs to be fluid and flexible in order to evolve. Staff also need access to a range of short training courses to support continuous professional development (CPD).

This notion is supported by The European Commission (2020) report: How to Recruit, Train and Motivate Well-Qualified Staff, which states:

“Alongside the establishment of a set of core competences for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) staff, it is important to consider how their initial and continuing education and training prepares them for their role. For most people the journey to professional competence takes time and skills are acquired through initial training, a period of induction into the profession, and during ongoing professional development, as well as through everyday practice. All staff (assistants, core practitioners and ECEC leaders need access to, and support, for all aspects of their initial and subsequent education and training.”

The Department of Education (DE) A Fair Start - Final Report and Action Plan May 2021 referenced both pay and qualifications as key issues within the early years workforce. The report states that: “Pay and qualifications should reflect the significance of the age group early years practitioners are working with by increasing qualifications at all levels.”

One of the actions contained in the report states: “DE and DoH should lead a process of co-design with key partners to develop an adequately resourced and supported training, qualifications and continuous professional development

strategy for the early years workforce, with consideration given to graduate-led provision.”

Employers report pay and working conditions are key factors in relation to staff turnover rates and recent recruitment difficulties. High staff turnover impacts negatively on the consistency of care and on children’s experiences and outcomes. This also makes it more difficult for employers to meet Minimum Standards requirements in terms of increasing qualification levels.

## **Gender diversity**

There is a significant imbalance in the childcare and early years workforce with females dominating the sector.

Jeremy Davis, Men in the Early Years (MITEY) Network run by the Fatherhood Institute, noted recently that the latest figures show that in England and Wales only 3% of staff working in early years education are male; in Scotland it is 4%.

In more than three-quarters of early years settings, there is not a single male employee. Davis goes on to point out this is not a phenomenon unique to the United Kingdom (UK) - it is a global issue. The proportion of male early years educators is close to 10% in Norway. Germany, after concerted investment and effort through its government-funded Men in KITAS (early childhood centers) campaign over the last decade, has broken the 6% barrier.

Warin et al (2020) argue that the development of a mixed gender workforce is slow and sporadic as women remain the primary source of recruitment into the sector. Wright and Brownhill (2018) add that the low proportion of male practitioners seems to be an oddity, an outlier, in a world that is, supposedly becoming more gender sensitive.

To bring about gender diversification in the Northern Ireland childcare workforce it is important first to gain a baseline understanding about how many men are currently employed in the sector and where they are located.

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland MLA Briefing: NI Assembly Motion on High Quality Affordable Childcare (February 2024), highlights the significant lack of diversity in those working in childcare and early learning, including the low numbers of men working in the profession. It notes that the Department of Education reported that in 2022-23, 100% of nursery school teachers in grant-aided schools were female. The report stresses that a more diverse workforce could both improve the availability of childcare for children but also address some of the gender stereotyping that exists around caring roles and responsibilities.



A larger number of men in the early years sector will provide children with both female and male role models to guide them in their formative years. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2019b) report, *Good Practice for Good Jobs in Early Childhood and Education and Care*, maintains that men participating in early years and childcare can be used as a measure to improve equality. The report states that to promote quality and increase the supply of potential workers, it is crucial that countries actively look at strategies to attract men into the sector.

Warin (2019) stresses however that gender equality is not simply achieved by recruiting more men. It is only achieved through developing gender sensitivity and the construction of a gender-flexible pedagogy. To do this he maintains that it is necessary for learners to witness more men in roles with young children.

### **Broader diversity Issues**

In addition to addressing gender equality, it is also important to consider the issue of whether or not the workforce reflects the ethnicities of the children and families it supports. Consideration should be given to collecting data through the current registration and inspection process on the ethnicity of the workforce and developing and funding strategies for attracting people who identify as people from ethnic minority backgrounds to careers in early years and childcare.

### **Experience levels**

McMullen et al (2020) note despite extensive study, there is little consensus about the relationship between educators' years of experience in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings and children's outcomes.

One of the most significant influences on workforce stability is staff turnover. Cassidy, Lower, Kintner-Duffy, Hegde, & Shim, (2011) noted turnover is potentially detrimental to quality in childcare because it impacts consistency and efforts to create continuity in relational-care systems. Research suggests that the primary determinants of turnover are staff working conditions, including regulatory features such as ratios, professional development opportunities, the quality of leadership and, most crucially, wages. Early years practitioner salaries are a vitally important issue, with implications both for the quality of provision and staff retention.

When early years and childcare professionals leave their positions, they are by necessity replaced by someone new, someone different. Each time this happens, efforts to create and maintain long-term trusting, supportive relationships,

considered necessary to optimise child and family-centered practices in quality settings, is compromised (Ackerman, 2006; Hale-Jinks et al., 2006; Whitebook & Sakai, 2003). Important bonds can be broken through staff turnover, and new ones need to be renegotiated and reformed (Cryer, Hurwitz, & Wolery, 2001). We currently have very little data here in Northern Ireland relating to staff turnover. This survey has produced some evidence relating to staff levels of experience.

## **Growing numbers of children with additional needs**

Early years and childcare providers are reporting growing numbers of children with additional needs in mainstream services. The PlayBoard State of the Sector Survey of School Aged Childcare (2024) reported an 84% increase in the numbers of children with additional needs attending school aged childcare settings.

Information provided by the Department of Education (2024) confirms that the number of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) has consistently increased over the last 20 years.

The latest figures tell us that:

- 18.4% (over 66,000) children in schools in NI are registered as having a SEN;
- 6.4% (over 24,000) of children have a statement of SEN; and
- the number of children with a statement of SEN has risen by 10% since 2017/18.

Research has shown that inclusive settings can benefit all children by promoting social skills, empathy and understanding of diversity. While there are challenges such as the need for disability awareness raising, specialised training, practical behaviour management strategies and additional resources, the overall trends towards inclusion in childcare is a positive step towards creating a more equitable society for all children.

The Northern Ireland Royal College of Speech and Language report, “We are the Village” (April, 2024), highlights that across the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland and globally, speech, language and communication consistently features in the top three special educational needs categories for preschool and primary school.

The report also references the work being taken forward within the Sure Start programmes in Northern Ireland. These programmes support parents with children aged under four years old, living in disadvantaged areas in Northern Ireland. In each of the projects, speech, language and communication



interventions are delivered in a tiered universal, targeted and specialist mode. The screening, training, targeted intervention and public health messaging in Sure Start aims to reduce the gap for children and families living in socio-economic disadvantaged areas and ultimately prevent or reduce the impact of speech, language and communication needs within these communities.

Following the Department of Education's acceptance of recommendation 2 of the (2021) Northern Ireland Assembly Public Accounts Committee (PAC) "Report on Impact Review of Special Educational Needs" (SEN), IPSOS was commissioned by the DE in April 2022, to carry out the Independent Review of SEN Provisions and Processes. The report indicates the need for more effective use of the substantial funding to deliver high quality, child-centered provision.

The report also indicated a wide range of studies and reports referencing the benefits of early intervention; however, under the current system and processes, early intervention for children with special educational needs is almost impossible as the majority of pre-schools cannot request an assessment by an Educational Psychologist and have limited access to the Education Authority supports. This can mean that some children will have to wait up to 26 weeks before they can access support for their additional learning needs.

The IPSOS report recommends that all DE funded pre-schools should have access to the Educational Psychology Service and through this access to the Education Authority Pupil Support Services.

Early years and childcare settings have a key role to play in helping to identify the needs of children at an early stage including signposting families to relevant support services.

The PAC report indicated that the new SEN Regulations and Code of Practice will require statutory pre-school settings to have Learning Support Coordinators which reflects the importance of early intervention to deal with problems as early as possible.

## **2. Background role and remit of the Childcare Partnership in Northern Ireland**

Childcare Partnerships (CCP's) were first established in April 2000 following the publication of the "Children First" Childcare Strategy (1999).

The Departments of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (now the Department of Health), Education and Economic Development (now the Department for the Economy) had lead responsibility for the delivery of this strategy and it was recognised that successful implementation would depend on a range of professionals and agencies from these sectors working together.

This led to the establishment of four CCP's initially with representation from statutory, voluntary, community and independent sectors.

The four former legacy Health and Social Services Boards at that time provided leadership within the CCP structure. In 2009 a Regional Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) was established by Section 7 (1) of the Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) replacing the four Health and Social Services Boards.

While lead policy responsibility for childcare policy subsequently transferred to the Department of Education (DE) in November 2006, responsibility for the CCP network and childcare regulation remained with the Department of Health.

Following the closure of the Regional HSCB, on 31 March 2022, HSCB functions migrated to the Department of Health and staff management to the Business Services Organisation.

The Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) within the DoH now currently provides a lead to the Childcare Partnership Team with arrangements and budgets confirmed on an annual basis. The five local Childcare Partnerships agreed to merge into one Regional Childcare Partnership in April 2023.

The Childcare Partnership team has responsibility for management of a range of early years budgets funded by both the Department of Health and Department of Education. The associated programs of activity include:

## Department of Health initiatives

- Early Years Development Fund, which covers staffing, a number of regional grants award schemes and a fully funded training programme which all aim to improve the quality of early years and childcare practice.
- The Fair Play Small Grant Scheme, which provides additional staff and resources to support the inclusion of children with additional needs. Demand for this service currently outstrips funds available year on year.
- The Family Support NI (FSNI) website, which was developed to create a comprehensive database of family support and registered childcare services across and within Northern Ireland. [Click here to access the Family Support NI website](#)

## Department of Education initiatives

- Sure Start Programme – Sure Start is a Programme targeted at parents and children under the age of four. There are 38 Sure Start projects across Northern Ireland. It brings together health, family support and early education services which are designed to support children's learning skills, health and well-being, and social and emotional development. Services are offered both in the home and in group-based settings. [Click here for further information regarding Sure Start services in Northern Ireland](#)
- The Bright Start School Aged Childcare (SACC) Grant Scheme. The Bright Start School Age Childcare (SAC) Grant Scheme provides up to 25% funding towards running costs for eligible school age social economy childcare providers in areas of disadvantage, rural areas and on the school estate.
- Bright Start Disability Holiday Grants Scheme. The purpose of this holiday grant scheme is to offer financial support to childcare providers to provide additional childcare (i.e. an extension to the normal service) to facilitate children with a disability accessing services during holiday periods such as Summer, Halloween, Christmas and Half-term.
- Bright Start Regional Grants with various providers.
- Promotion of Registered Provision via the Family Support NI website.

### **3. Aim and purpose of the audit**

The Department of Health asked the Childcare Partnership team, to carry out a Qualification Audit for all staff employed in registered group based childcare facilities in Northern Ireland.

Homebased settings were not included in this review.

The key objectives were to:

- provide comprehensive information of the qualification levels in group based childcare settings registered with HSC Trusts under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995;
- inform the development of Government policy and in particular the review of the DoH Minimum Standards for Childminding and Day-care for Children under the age of 12 years and inform the developing Early Learning and Childcare Strategy;
- facilitate the discharge of the Trusts' statutory duties in regard to registration and inspection and Article 20 Reports under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995;
- inform the childcare sector of the current level of qualifications in the workforce to facilitate workforce planning going forward; and
- provide the public and in particular families using these services with information on the qualification levels held within the childcare workforce.

In Northern Ireland, the Department of Health Minimum Standards for Childminding and Daycare for Children Under Age 12 Years aims to ensure the safety and well-being of children through a consistent level of quality and a regional approach to registration and inspection.

## 4. Methodology

As Health and Social Care Trusts have a legal requirement under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 to obtain information from child care providers as part of the registration and inspection process, the self-evaluation template completed by each group-based setting prior to inspection was extended to include an audit of qualifications.

A Steering Group was set up by two of the Childcare Leads within the CCP team, Jenny Adair and Mairead McMullen, to direct and support this programme of work. Representation was drawn from a range of key stakeholders including: The HSC Trust Early Years teams, membership organisations, including Early Years – the Organisation for Young Children (EYO), PlayBoard, the EYO Daycare Forum, Early Years Employers Forum, a selection of other group based childcare providers, and the HSC Leadership Centre.

Two Microsoft Excel forms were created to administer the audit. One gathered the organisational information and was completed once per setting. The second form was to be completed once per employee. The only connected fields between the two forms was the Trust area, setting name and CCP reference number.

The forms were developed and tested on two occasions with the support of the members of the steering group. User feedback was then utilised to simplify and amend as necessary. The input of all stakeholders was instrumental in ensuring the qualification audit tool was fit for purpose and met the needs of both the early years providers and the registration and inspecting Trusts.

Each HSC Trust Early Years team agreed to issue a letter to all their registered group-based childcare providers explaining the purpose of the qualification audit, instructions on how to complete both surveys with access links to both included. Each letter also included the settings unique CCP reference number. This was utilised to avoid any duplication as some similarities existed across individual Trust registration numbers. The list of registered group-based childcare providers was accessed from data held on the Family Support NI (FSNI) public register of childcare providers.

All of the completed forms automatically populated a centralised excel spreadsheet. Responders had the option of saving a PDF of each submission to their own devices at the time of submission, for future reference.

Information received was collated, formatted and staff verified the raw data submitted via the online forms. Once this data that was verified and checked,

anonymised data was then shared with the Childcare Partnership leads for further analysis.

A full data protection impact assessment (DPIA) was taken forward as part of the commissioning process. The final data sharing agreement was issued to all HSC Trusts and the HSC leadership center for final sign off in March 2023 by the CCP leads on behalf of the SPPG.

Letters were issued on 27th March 2023 by the HSC Trust Early Years teams. The qualification audit was widely published throughout Childcare Partnership networks and throughout SPPG and FSNi social media channels. Queries were managed via the CCP Training Team and a list of frequently asked questions developed to support communications.

Staff were asked to submit the highest level of qualification held. The qualification audit remained open for a 4-week period with an initial closing date of 28th April 2023. Consultation with the sector during this period indicated that a number of settings required additional time to complete the audit therefore an extension was agreed allowing a further 3 weeks for completion until 12th May 2023.

In terms of challenges, not all of the respondents completed all relevant sections and some settings had entered inaccurate CCP reference numbers. All data was therefore verified and cleansed.



## 5. Audit findings

At the 29th March 2023 there were **1127 registered group-based childcare settings** listed on the FSNI Public Register.

**721 of these groups (64%) responded to the Qualification Audit.**

There was a total of **5665 staff reflected in the survey responses** each indicating they worked within one of the following roles: Early Years/Childcare Staff, Early Years Preschool Worker, Non-Early years Staff, Student, Apprentice and Volunteer.

**Non-Early Years Staff** included: roles such as Bus Driver, Administrator, Cook, Domestic Assistant, Cleaner, Treasurer, Care Taker, Handyman, Gardener) as this is part of the normal inspection process. It should be noted that **these staff have not been included in the overall staff analysis** going forward.

The total **number of relevant staff responses** was therefore **5428**.

### 5.1 Management survey

Settings were asked to identify their settings type of governance or legal status in the management section of the survey and could choose from the following options:

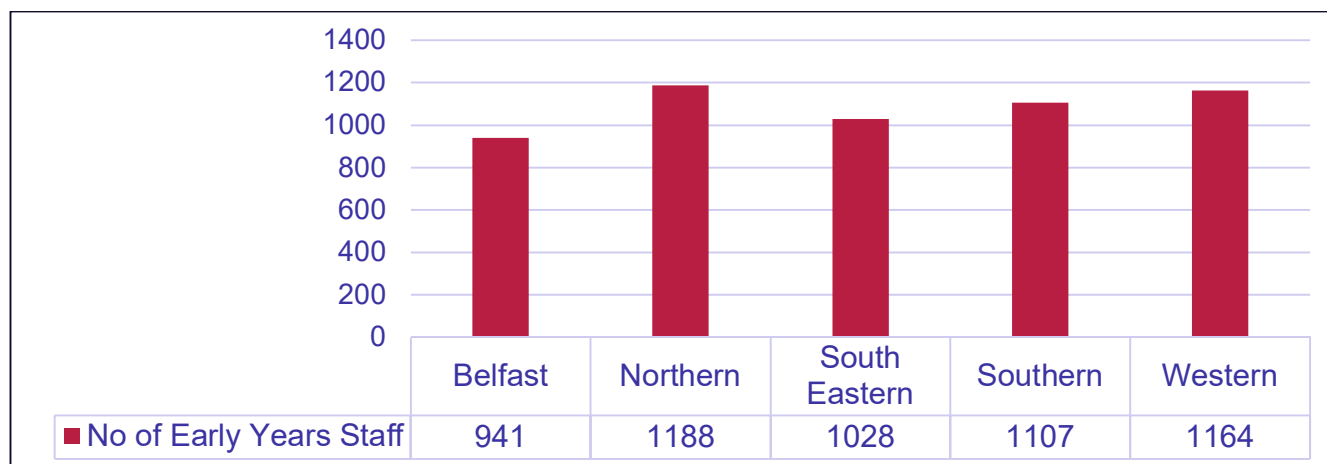
- not for profit;
- private provider;
- registered charity;
- social enterprise; and
- other.

36% of organisational responses were from privately owned providers and 63% were non-profit-making providers such as community-based groups, Sure Start registered provision, charitable organisations and social enterprises.

The remaining 1% listed themselves as 'other' which included: Health and Social Care Trust provision (HSCT), childcare provision on a university site and crèche provision within a further education college.

## 5.2 Staff survey

**Table 1: Total staff surveyed by Trust area**



The highest number of staff responses received were from the Northern and Western Trust areas followed by South and South Eastern Trust. The lowest responses received were from the Belfast Trust area.

Responses received indicated that the majority of early years and childcare staff surveyed, 64%, worked within full day-care. Approximately 20% worked in preschool playgroup settings, 9% in out of school facilities, 4% in the Sure Start Developmental Programmes for 2-3 Year Old's, 3% in crèche settings and 0.35% in summer schemes.

The survey responses also identified a number of students, apprentices and volunteers working within the childcare workforce.

176 respondents indicated that they were an Irish Medium setting including:

- 19 in a Sure Start Developmental Programme for 2-3 Years Old's;
- 97 in Full Day-care;
- 11 in Out of School; and
- 49 in a Preschool setting.

601 Staff indicated that they worked within the Department of Education's Pre-school Education Programme.

Respondents were given a drop-down list for positions held and could tick all that applied to each staff member for example, as illustrated in Table 2 (page 18), one respondent identified as a manager and playworker, another identified as bank

staff working as a deputy manager and early years specialist (EYS) within the setting.

Bank staff were being utilised across all Trust areas which is not surprising given the current recruitment difficulties.

Table 2 (below) also demonstrates that the majority of staff responses 2857, (53%) held a childcare worker position.

1863 staff (34%) indicated that they worked in a leadership role such as a room supervisor, early years specialist, manager, deputy manager, and registered person.

143 staff identified as a playworker.

53 staff held an early years specialist position with 36 working within a preschool setting, 6 within a daycare nursery, 5 within a Sure Start Developmental Programme for 2-3 Year Old's and 6 in out of school.

48 staff worked as a volunteer, 68 responses identified as students and 58 as an apprentice.

**Table 2: Staff position held by type of setting**

Position Held	Developmental Programme for 2- 3 Year Old's	Creche	Day Nursery	Out of School	Pre-School Playgroup	Summer Scheme	Grand Total
Bank Staff	6	7	237	48	57	14	369
Bank Staff / Deputy Manager	0	0	0	1	3	0	4
Bank Staff / Playworker	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Bank Staff Deputy Manager / Early Years Specialist (EYS)	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Bank Staff /Manager	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Childcare Worker	114	80	2076	156	428	3	2857
Deputy Manager	10	13	281	69	203	0	576
Deputy Manager / Playworker	0	0	0	5	0	0	5
Deputy Manager /EYS	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Early Years Specialist	5	0	1	1	0	0	7
Manager	6	12	181	67	176	1	443
Manager /Coordinator	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Manager EYS	0	0	5	1	34	0	40
Manager /EYS/ Playworker	0	0	0	3	0	0	3
Manager/ Playworker	0	0	0	13	0	0	13
Manager /Registered Person	0	0	14	0	0	0	14
Playworker	0	2	16	79	16	0	113
Registered Person	1	2	1	3	5	0	12
Room Supervisor	51	29	579	24	63	1	747
Room Supervisor/ Playworker	0	0	2	6	0	0	8
Student	4	1	43	3	12	0	63
Apprentice	0	0	51	5	2	0	58
Volunteer	2	0	10	9	27	0	48
No data	0	0	2	0	40	0	42

## Gender

As expected the majority of staff (5325) were female. A single respondent chose not to identify as male or female.

102 staff identified as male. This was broken down as follows:

- 30 male staff worked in a managerial role (manager, deputy manager, registered person, room supervisor/leader);
- The survey also identified 7 male playworkers, 7 male volunteers, 35 male childcare workers and 17 male bank staff. (some of these staff held multiple positions); and
- Students and apprentices were also mainly female, though the survey picked up 5 male students and 1 male apprentice.

## Hours worked

Responses indicated that 53% of staff worked less than 30 hours per week.

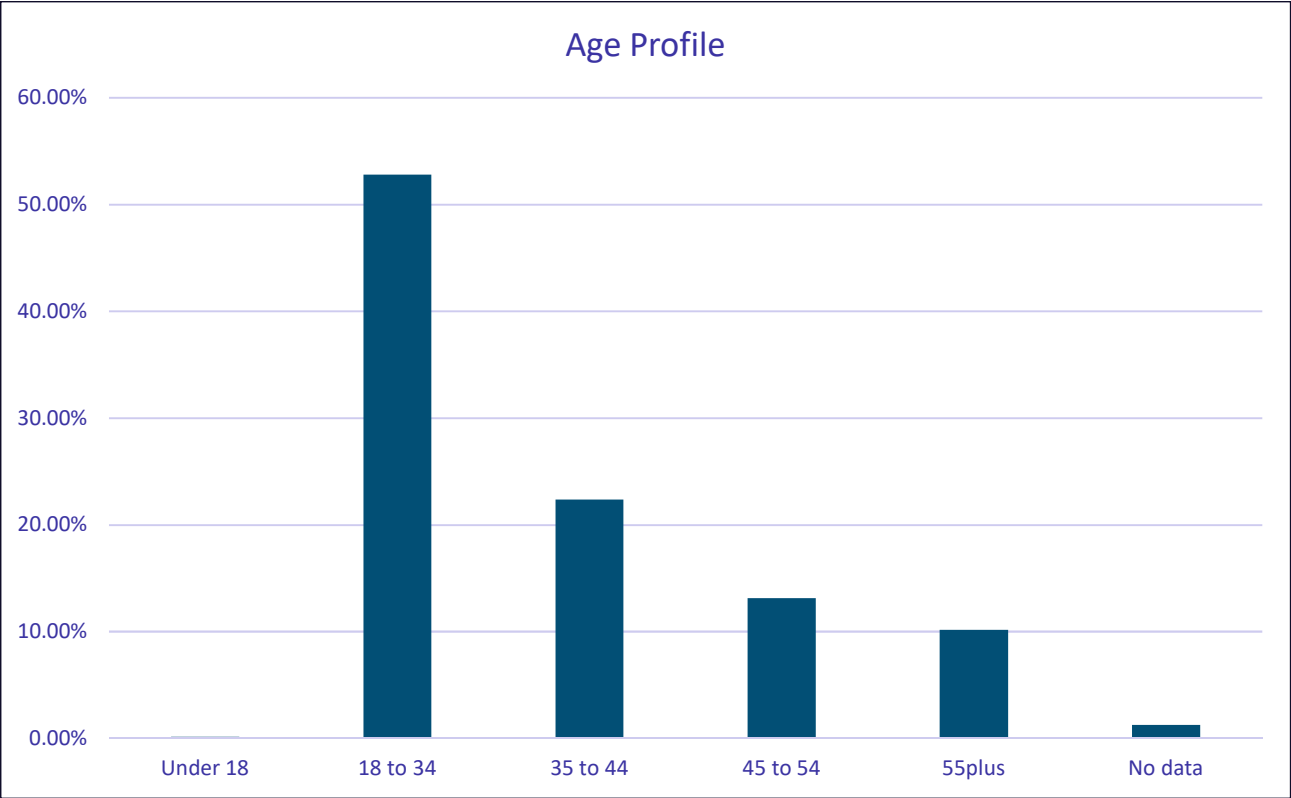
- 10% worked less than 16 hours per week (548);
- 43% worked 16-30 hours (2316);
- 40% worked 30-48 hours (2170); and
- 1% worked 49+hours per week (32)

5% of the total number of respondents were bank staff and 1% were students.

## Age range

Table 3 (page,20) reflects the respondents' age profiles, and indicates a relatively young workforce within group-based provision.

**Table 3: Respondents age profile**



Staff responses indicated that:

**A majority of respondents (53%) were aged 18-34;**

- 21% (1123 staff) were aged 18-24 and 32% (1744) were aged 25-34
- 22% of staff (1215) were aged 35-44
- 13% staff (713) were aged 45-54; and
- 10% were aged 55 or more.

No data regarding age was listed against 70 responses to this question.

The audit also picked up 10 staff working within group based childcare settings who were under 18 years of age.



## Experience levels

Survey results demonstrated that approximately:

- 30% of staff had less than 1 years' experience;
- 21% had 2-3 years' experience;
- 24% had 4-9 years' experience; and
- 23% had over 10 years' experience.

3% of providers provided no response to this question

### Overall:

51% of respondents had less than 3 years' experience;  
75% had less than 10 years' experience; and  
23% had over 10 years' experience.

## Years of experience by position held

When this data was further broken down by the position held:

- 738 managers were reported as having less than 3 years' experience (noticeably 349 of those had only 6 months to one years' experience);
- 37% of staff who worked within the DE Preschool Education Programme had less than 3 years' experience;
- 41% of staff working within the Irish Medium sector had less than 3 years' experience;
- 3% of volunteers had less than 1 years' experience 43% less than 3 years; and
- 285 bank staff had less than 3 years' experience.

## Qualifications

The survey identified approximately 266 different qualification titles from levels 2-8. A full list of all qualifications at each level can be found in **Appendix 1**.

A drop-down box was provided within the survey which identified a broad range of early years and childcare qualifications to choose from at each level. The survey also provided 'other' as an option at each level which allowed respondents to enter qualification titles themselves. On reflection this proved problematic as many titles were incomplete or inaccurate or very vague e.g. NVQ 3 England, A Level, GCSE. SPPG staff therefore had to spend considerable time cleansing the data.

209 respondents provided no data on qualifications held and 697 staff were recorded as not holding a relevant childcare qualification at the time of the survey.

The DoH Minimum Standards and Associated Implementation Guidance notes:

“The recruitment of unqualified staff (including those coming through training courses) is permitted as long as the minimum level of 50% of staff with a qualification is maintained.”

Table 4 (page,23) provides information on the total number of qualifications held at each level, the numbers of staff that held these qualifications at each level and the most common types of qualifications held. The survey indicated that:

- 37% of staff were qualified to level 3;
- 33% of staff were qualified to level 5 and above;
- 28% of staff held level 2 qualifications; and
- 1.17% level 4.

**Table 4: Qualifications held by staff at levels 2-8**

Qualification Level	Total Number of Qualifications Found at this level	No. of staff that held a Qualification at this Level	As a percentage overall	Most Common Qualifications
2	43	1276	28%	Children's Care learning and Development NVQ in Childcare and Education
3	74	1675	37%	Children's Care Learning and Development, NVQ in Childcare and Education and NVQ in Early Years Care and Education
4	22	53	1.17%	Advanced Diploma in Childcare and Education
5	36	1057	23%	Diploma in Leadership for Children's Care Learning and Development – 578 (121 Advanced Practice & 457 Management) BTEC Higher National Diploma in Childcare – 215 Foundation Degree (Childcare related) -101
6	66	410	9%	BA in Early Childhood Studies - 213
7	21	49	1.08%	Post Graduate Certificates Diploma's Masters BTEC in Strategic Management and Leadership
8	2	2	0.04%	Doctor of Philosophy (PHD) in Management Doctorate in Childhood Studies
Total	264	4522		

## **Qualifications held by managers and deputy managers**

- 5 managers/deputy managers were reported as having a level 2 qualification;
- 221 had Level 3 qualifications the most common being the NVQ in Early Years Care and Education or Childcare and Education;
- 19 managers had level 4 qualifications mainly Advanced Diplomas or BTEC Higher National Certificates;
- 601 staff held level 5 qualifications the most common being the Diploma in Leadership for Children's Care Learning and Development (Management, 307), (Advanced Practice, 89) or Higher National Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care (Leadership and Management);
- 199 managers held a degree level qualification;
- 37 managers held a range of post graduate or masters level qualifications; and
- 2 managers held Level 8 qualifications one a Doctorate in Childhood Studies and one a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Management.

## **Qualifications held by room leaders /supervisors**

- 21 staff were reported as holding level 2 qualifications – the most popular being the Children's Care Learning and Development Qualification (CCLD);
- 444 staff held a variety of level 3 qualifications – the most common being the CCLD Extended Diploma, followed by the NVQ in Early Years Care and Education, Children's Care Play Learning and Practice and the NVQ in Childcare and Education;
- 7 held level 4 qualifications such as the Advanced Diploma in Childcare and Education and Higher National Certificates;
- 194 held level 5 qualifications – the most common being the Diploma in Leadership for Children's Care Learning and Development (Management);
- 64 staff were qualified to degree level; and
- 4 held a post graduate or master's qualification.

## **Table 5: Qualifications held by early years specialists**

The list on page 25 provides some insight into the qualifications held by those staff referenced as Early Years Specialists (EYS), with the majority holding qualifications from levels 5-7.

<b>Level</b>	<b>Qualifications held by Early Years Specialists</b>
Level 2	Diploma in Childcare and Education
Level 3	NVQ or SVQ Early Years Care and Education
Level 4	NVQ or SVQ Early Years, Care and Education
Level 5	A Higher National Diploma in Early Childhood Studies
Level 5	A Higher National Diploma in Early Years
Level 5	A Higher National Diploma in Playwork
Level 5	BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care (Leadership and Management)
Level 5	Foundation Degree in Early Childhood Studies
Level 5	Foundation Degree in Early Years
Level 5	Leadership and Management in Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development
Level 5	QCF Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Children's Care Learning and Development (Management) (Wales and Northern Ireland)
Level 6	BA Education Studies in Early Childhood Education
Level 6	BA (Hons) Degree in Early Years
Level 6	BA (Hons) Childhood Studies
Level 6	BA (Hons) Degree Early Childhood Studies
Level 6	Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) Primary Degree Course
Level 6	Bachelor of Science (HONS) in Early Childhood Care, Health & Education
Level 6	Bachelor of Science in Childhood Studies
Level 7	BTEC Level 7 Award in Strategic Management and Leadership
Level 7	Early Childhood Education with Qualified Teacher Status
Level 7	Post Graduate Degree in Play Therapy
Level 7	Post Graduate Certificate in Early Years Education (PGCE) (3-8 years)
Level 7	Postgraduate Certificate in Early Childhood Studies

Results indicated that 601 staff worked within the DE Pre-School Education Programme. In terms of the range of qualification held the survey found that:

- 103 staff held level 2 qualifications. 74 out of the 103 held the Children's Care Learning and Development Qualification;
- 146 staff held level 3 qualifications. There were 21 different qualifications at this level;
- 6 held level 4. 4 out of the 6 held the Advanced Diploma in Childcare and Education;
- 177 staff held level 5 qualifications. The most common being the Diploma in Leadership for Children's Care Learning and Development (Management) or (Advanced Practice) 131 out of 177;
- 89 were qualified to degree level – the most common being the BA in Early Childhood Studies;
- 10 held level 7 qualifications the most common being a Postgraduate Certificate in Early Years Education (3-8 years), followed by a Masters Qualification in Early Childhood Studies;
- 55 staff provided no data and 15 indicated they held no relevant childcare qualification.

## **Playwork**

143 staff specifically identified themselves as playworkers. When asked about positions held however the majority of these staff held early years and childcare qualifications. 14 out of the 143 playworker responses provided no data or stated the staff member had no qualification.

## **Playwork qualifications held**

Only 24 staff listed as a playworker held specific playwork qualifications including those listed below:

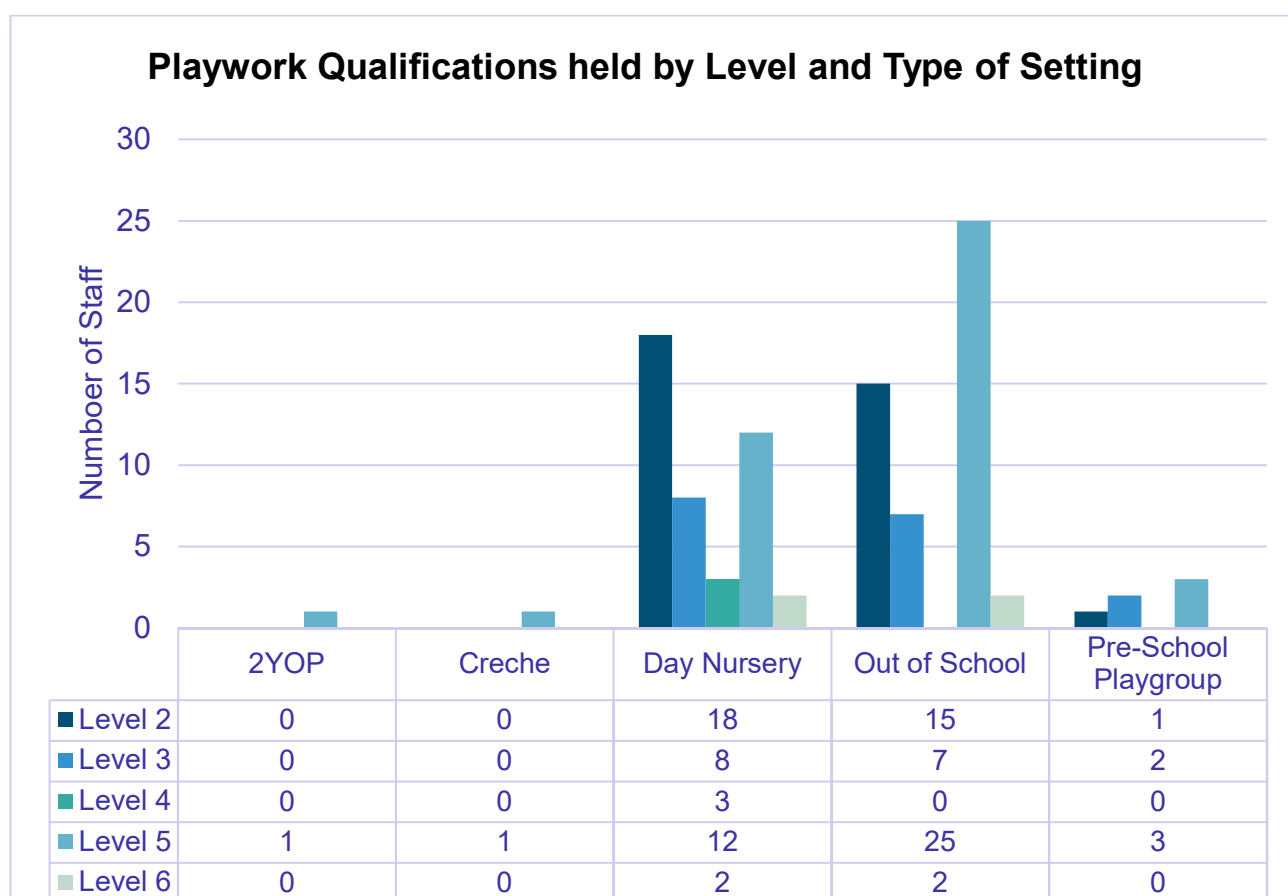
- Level 2 or Level 3 Certificate in Playwork - 10
- Level 3 Playwork in a Youth Setting qualification – 1
- Level 5 Diploma or Higher Education/National Diploma in Playwork – 12
- 1 person held a Playwork Degree

100 staff overall held Playwork specific qualifications.



**TABLE 6: Playwork qualifications held by level and type of setting**

This table (below) demonstrates the types of settings the staff with playwork qualifications were based in and what level of qualification the staff member held. Playworkers seemed mainly to be found in full daycare and standalone out of school provision but were also located in other types of childcare settings including the Sure Start Developmental Programme for Two to Three-Year-Old Programme, creche and preschool playgroups.



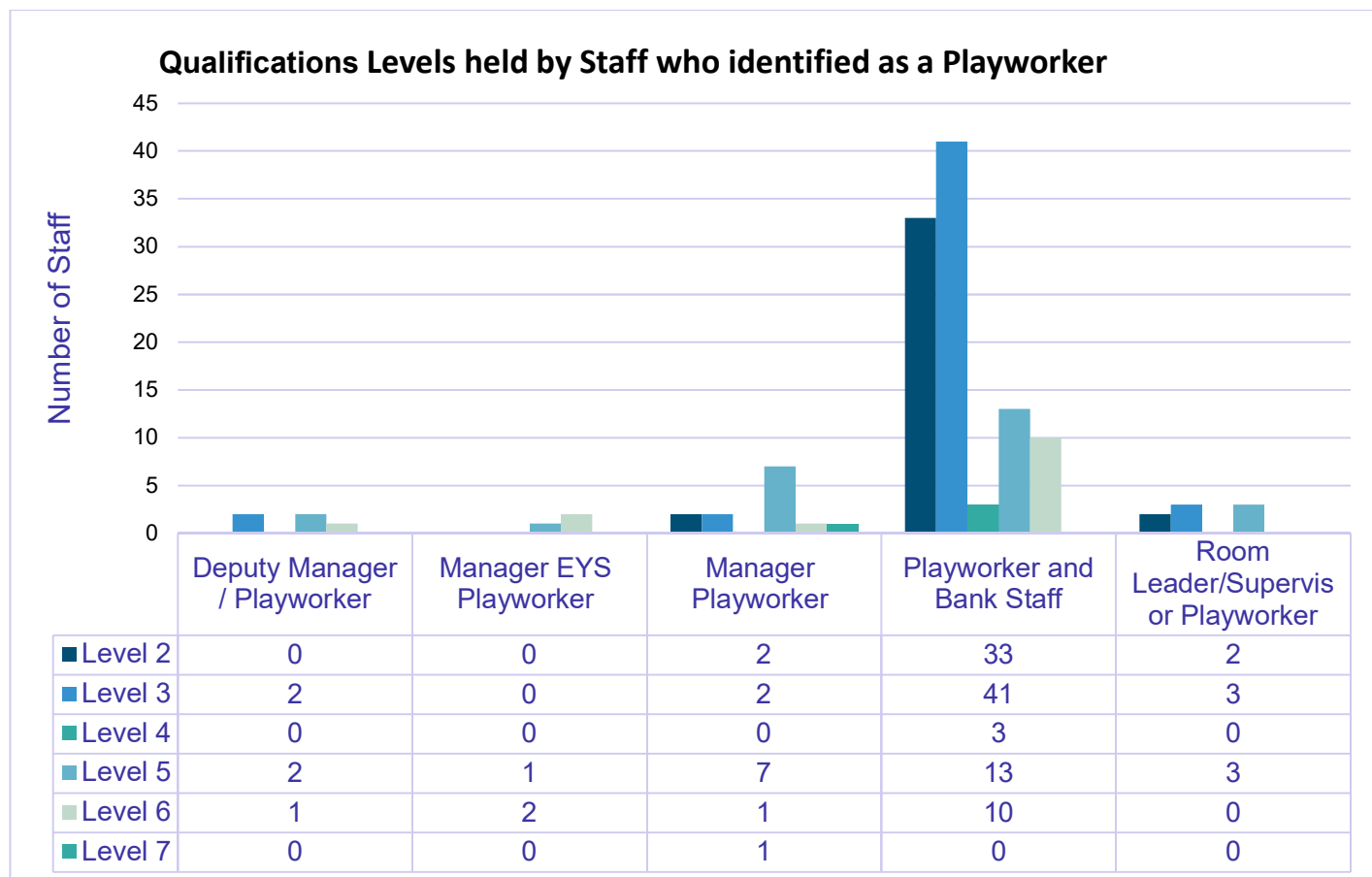
A full list of the early years, childcare and playwork qualifications held by the 129 staff who identified as playworkers are as follows:

- Certificate in Playwork level 2
- Diploma in Playwork Level 2
- Certificate in Playwork level 3
- Playwork in a Youth Work Setting

- Advanced Certificate in Playwork
- Diploma in Playwork level 3
- Diploma of Higher Education in Playwork
- Foundation Degree in Playwork
- Higher National Diploma in Playwork
- BA Hons Childhood Development and Playwork
- Graduate Diploma in Playwork
- Playwork Degree

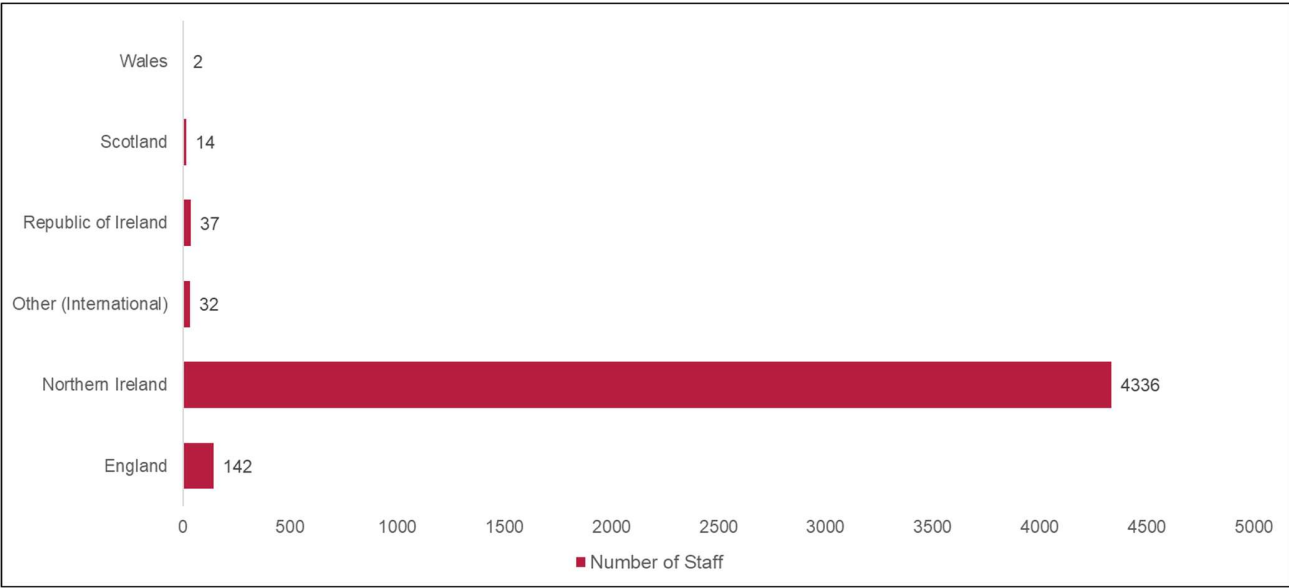
**Table 7: Playwork qualifications by level and job role**

This graph shows the numbers identifying as a playworker the types of job roles those staff held and the level of qualification the staff had gained.



**Table 8: Qualifications achieved by country of origin**

Findings suggest most of the respondents completed their qualifications in Northern Ireland (4336) however some staff have completed qualifications within other UK nations and the Republic of Ireland. (142 in England, 14 in Scotland, 2 in Wales, 37 in the Republic of Ireland.) 32 respondents indicated that they gained qualifications in other international countries.



Responses received indicated that 696 staff held no relevant qualification at the time of the audit and has been broken down by job role and age in Table 9 on page 30.

The majority of staff listed with no relevant qualifications indicated that they worked in a childcare worker role, 8 were working in a managerial role, 10 worked at room supervisor level, 127 respondents were listed as bank staff, 11 as playworkers, 33 as volunteers and 1 student.

**Table 9: Staff listed as having no qualifications by position held and age**

Job Role	Staff listed with no Qualifications by Job Role and Age							
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 or over	Not indicated	Grand Total
Bank Staff	61	18	14	10	11	6	2	122
Bank Staff / Volunteer	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	5
Childcare Worker	199	123	75	57	39	8	5	506
Deputy Manager	1		1	1	0	0	1	4
Manager	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Playworker	2		1	3	5	0	0	11
Registered Person	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	3
Room Leader/Supervisor	5	3	0	1	0	1	0	10
Student	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Volunteer	4	5	11	4	6	3		33
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>696</b>

In terms of age range:

- 39% of respondents with no qualifications were aged 18-24,
- 22% aged 25-34
- 26% aged 35-54 and
- 12% were 55 years of age or over

The associated Minimum Standards Implementation Guidance (Page16) notes:

“The recruitment of unqualified staff (including those coming through training schemes) is permitted as long as the minimum level of 50% of staff with a qualification is maintained. New staff who are in the 50% unqualified staff group must register within the first year of employment with vocational training which will lead to a relevant qualification. This should be completed within a reasonable period of time. (This will include relief staff used on a regular basis).”

It should be noted however that 252 (36%) of staff listed with no qualifications were working towards a qualification at the time of the audit. 70 staff at level 2, 146 at level 3, 3 at level 4, 12 at level 5, 19 at level 6 and 2 were completing a level 7 qualification. This would evidence an ongoing commitment to continuous professional development at all levels within the sector.

Overall 877 staff were working towards completion of a qualification at the time of the audit as detailed below:

- 120 at level 2
- 362 level 3
- 8 level 4
- 273 level 5
- 99 level 6 and
- 15 at level 7.

The Children's Care Learning and Development Qualification was most common at levels 2,3 and 5. Eight staff were working towards Playwork qualifications, 2 out of the 8 listed the Transitional Award in Playwork from Early Years.

19 staff were working towards qualifications that are aimed at supporting children with additional needs. 1 staff member was working towards the Assessors Award and 1 a Teaching Award in Education and Training. The full list of qualifications that staff were working towards can be found in **Appendix 2**.

## **Staff holding Health and Social Care Qualifications**

The Survey identified 43 staff who held Health and Social Care qualifications. Health and Social Care Qualifications are not explicitly referenced in Minimum Standards therefore, consideration may need to be given to mapping the content of these qualifications to the Childrens Care Learning and Development qualifications or the development of refresher training or transitional modules to support career development. The full breakdown of Health and Social Care Qualifications listed can be viewed in Table 10 page 32.

**Table 10: Total staff holding health and social care qualifications by position held**

Level	Qualifications	Bank Staff	Childcare Worker	Manager	Playworker	Room Leader/ Supervisor	Grand Total
Level 2	First Diploma in Health and Social Care	0	1	0	0	0	1
Level 2	GCE Advanced Level Double Award in Health and Social Care	0	1	0	0	0	1
Level 2	Health and Social Care	0	5	0	0	0	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>
Level 3	A Level Double Award Health and Social Care	0	1	0	0	0	1
Level 3	A Level in Health and Social Care	0	8	0	1	0	9
Level 3	Advanced Health and Social care	0	1	0	0	0	1
Level 3	BTEC Extended Certificate in Health and Social Care	0	1	0	0	0	1
Level 3	BTEC Health and Social Care	0	3	0	0	0	3
Level 3	BTEC National Diploma in Health and Social Care	1	1	0	0	1	3
Level 3	Diploma in Health and Social Care		1	0	0	0	1
Level 3	Diploma in Health and Social Care Extended	1	2	0	0	2	5
Level 3	Health and Social Care	1	5	1	1	0	8
<b>Total</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>32</b>
Level 4	Higher National Certificate in Health and Social care	0	2	0	0	0	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>
Level 6	BSc Hons Health and Social Care Policy	0	1	0	0	1	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>43</b>

## Core Training

Respondents were asked to identify what type of core training staff attended. Core training requirements are listed within the Minimum Standards for Childminding and Daycare and include Child Protection /Safeguarding, Paediatric First Aid, Health and Safety, Fire Safety, and Food Hygiene

Table 11 on page 33 illustrates the range of core training courses completed by respondents across the various types of settings.



**Table 11: Core training courses completed by type of setting**

Type of Setting	Total Staff surveyed	Child Protection/ safeguarding	Paediatric First Aid Training	Level 2 Food Hygiene	Health and Safety	Fire Safety	Designated Child Protection Officer
Two-Year-Old Programme	199	174	153	149	103	133	41
Creche	146	128	128	121	75	101	47
Day Nursery	3499	2852	2435	1428	1124	1371	570
Out of School	496	389	386	315	194	221	182
Pre-School Playgroup	1069	777	828	738	385	416	486
Summer Scheme	19	18	9	4	4	19	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>5428</b>	<b>4338</b>	<b>3939</b>	<b>2755</b>	<b>1885</b>	<b>2261</b>	<b>1327</b>

Respondents also had the opportunity within the survey to identify ongoing core training needs and could choose from all that applied.

**Table 12: Identified core training requests**

Identified Core Training Needs	Number of times requested
Risk Assessment and Manual Handling	155
Designated Child Protection Officer	76
Fire Safety and Risk Assessment	156
Health and Safety	155
Level 2 Food Hygiene	157
Paediatric First Aid – Full	97
Paediatric First Aid – Refresher	98
Safeguarding / Child Protection Full	78
Safeguarding / Child Protection Refresher	89
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1061</b>

This information was utilised to support the development of the Childcare Partnership's core training programme.

## 6. Conclusions

In terms of meeting the objectives, the audit has provided comprehensive information on the qualification levels in group based childcare settings registered with HSC Trusts under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995.

Information gathered will be utilised to inform the development of Government Policy and in particular the review of the Minimum Standards for Childminding and Day-care for Children under the age of 12 years. This report will also help to facilitate the discharge of the Trusts statutory duties in regard to registration and inspection and inform Article 20 Reports under the Children Northern Ireland Order. Findings will also be used to facilitate both regional and local workforce planning initiatives going forward.

The Minimum Standards for Childminding and Day-care states: “The person in charge/manager and deputy should have at least a qualification at QCF Level 5 Diploma in Child Care, Learning and Development or Playwork; or a relevant occupational qualification in early years’ education, social work, nursing, teaching or health visiting; and 2 years’ experience working with children aged 0-4 years.”

“Those currently employed in a deputy manager or other child care role are required to agree with the employer to complete a level 5 qualification within an agreed period of time if applying for the post of manager. In the event of a person acting in a manager or deputy manager role on a temporary basis, the planned arrangements for post holders to achieve the required Level 5 qualification must be agreed with the registering HSC Trust.”

The Implementation Guidance which sits alongside the Minimum Standards also states that: “The following qualifications have been agreed by DoH as those that meet the requirements for the manager/deputy manager full day-care role:

- BA (Hons) Degree in Early Childhood Studies, or degree level qualification in early years or playwork;
- QCF Level 5 Diploma in Children’s Care Learning and Development (Management) Wales/NI QCF;
- QCF Level 5 Diploma in Playwork QCF; or
- a relevant occupational qualification in early years’ education, social work, nursing, teaching or health visiting and at least two years’ experience in employment working with children of the age group relevant to the setting they will be working in. Volunteer experience can be included providing it is with the same age group relevant to the setting.”

The Minimum Standards also note that team leaders or supervisors should have at least a qualification at Level 3 in Childcare Learning and Development or Playwork. At least 50% of all other childcare staff should have a minimum qualification at Level 2 in Children's Care Learning and Development or Playwork. Other staff should be in the process of gaining these qualifications within a reasonable time.

The survey identified that the majority of staff were qualified to level 3 though growing numbers of staff are now qualified to level 5 and above. In terms of positions held, 34% of staff in leadership roles held qualifications at level 4 or above. The Early Years Care, Education and Play Employers Forum Workforce Survey (2024) also referred to almost 50% of respondents who had staff qualified to degree level.

As referenced in Minimum Standards, managers have a key role as the person-in-charge of the setting on a daily basis, and for this reason the manager or deputy manager of each setting will be required to have relevant managerial/professional experience training and or qualifications.

Three-quarters of European countries also require lead educators working with children aged 3 and older to have a bachelor's degree or higher qualification, though only one-third have such a requirement for those working with children under 3 years old.

### **Range of qualifications held by early years and childcare staff**

The survey has demonstrated that there is a wide range of different qualifications held by early years and childcare staff at all levels. This presents difficulties for students, employers and the HSC Trust inspectors in terms of determining equivalency to those qualifications mentioned in the Minimum Standards including their relevance and appropriateness to meet standards and practice requirements.

### **Country of origin**

The audit identified that most of the respondents completed their qualifications in Northern Ireland (4336) however the findings suggest some staff have completed qualifications within other UK nations, as previously referenced on page 29. Other UK nations and the Republic of Ireland have provided guidance on what qualifications are deemed relevant and/or equivalent for early years practitioners. Collaboration with key contacts should be further explored to secure potential

learning opportunities in terms of providing similar guidance on relevance and equivalency here in Northern Ireland.

### **Accessing qualifications and training**

The Southern Regional College research and feasibility study into management qualifications which was commissioned by the Department for the Economy in March 2025, found some staff are unwilling to commit to completing a higher-level qualification. This is due to the fact that there is very little difference in pay and conditions and it takes time and commitment to complete qualifications at level 5 or above.

Staff shortages also mean employers find it difficult to release staff or obtain backfill to attend training. Pending reviews on pay and conditions should consider how to enable employers to reward staff who embark on continuous professional development opportunities to improve the overall quality and sustainability of childcare provision.

Pay and working conditions are key factors linked to staff turnover rates. As previously highlighted high staff turnover impacts negatively on the consistency of care and on children's experiences and outcomes. It also presents a challenge to employers and makes it harder to achieve targets for increasing qualification levels in the workforce. More research in regard to staff turnover rates would be welcomed to inform workforce planning.

The cost of accessing non-funded courses, paying certification costs and or accreditation can be an additional expense for staff and employers. Accessing staff cover is required to enable employers to release staff to access training and access qualifications this brings additional cost pressures.

Further enhancing existing funding streams would benefit those entering the sector with no relevant qualification and, the existing cohort of staff qualified to level 2 and level 3 to develop their skills and knowledge to meet Minimum Standards requirements and support succession planning.

Many staff work long hours in full daycare and often complete training outside of their hours without any additional remuneration. Employers are now paying overtime to incentivise staff to complete both core and continuous professional development training requirements.

Staff may have to travel to access training and qualifications if it is not delivered in their local areas. Training providers now offer a hybrid approach to delivery methods e.g. face to face and online this has in some part addressed this issue

however not all staff have access to information technology resources or have good internet access.

Language barriers or disability can also pose challenges in understanding course materials or engaging in discussions online or face to face. The use of funded interpreting services has been utilised by the CCP Training team to mitigate these circumstances.

Difficulty in having prior experience or informal learning recognised can also impact on career development and employment opportunities. This may need to be given consideration during the review of the DoH Minimum Standards.

The Minimum Standards also notes that the Registered Person must ensure that within one month all newly appointed staff have induction training on:

- The setting's policies and procedures;
- Child protection, including whistle blowing;
- Management of children's behaviour;
- Recording;
- Working with parents;
- Health and safety; and
- Equal opportunities.

Consideration should be given to commissioning further research into good practice in effective induction in an early years or playwork settings and use the findings to coproduce with employers, training providers and awarding organisations an accredited induction programme and or qualification for early years and childcare staff which could provide a stepping stone to the completion of a relevant early years and playwork qualification.

### **Continuous Professional Development**

Minimum Standards note: "The Registered Person or person in charge ensures that training and development needs of staff are identified and addressed and facilitates staff to avail of development opportunities."

Evidence from the audit findings did suggest many staff are utilising continuous professional development opportunities.

Continued professional development matters both for enhancing the quality of practice, and for providing career development opportunities for educators and practitioners.

The European Union Quality Framework (2014) includes two quality statements relating to the workforce, calling on member states to achieve:

- Well-qualified staff with initial and continuing training that enable them to fulfil their professional role; and
- Supportive working conditions including professional leadership which creates opportunities for observation, reflection, planning, teamwork and cooperation with parents.

Responsibility for CPD is shared between:

- The individual, who is pursuing their own professional journey,
- The service, which is responsible for its staff and its overall quality of service, and
- The various Departments, which oversees and supports system quality.

*Nurturing Skills:* The Workforce Plan for Early Learning and Childcare and School Aged Childcare (2022-2028) in the Republic of Ireland notes that CPD includes not just formal training courses, but also non-formal and informal CPD.

- **Formal CPD** - involves intentional, structured activities leading to formal recognition, such as professional or academic qualifications.
- **Non-formal CPD** involves intentional, structured activities without formal certification, such as short courses, webinars, coaching, mentoring, attending conferences and events, and communities of practice.
- **Informal CPD** involves everyday practices that enhance professional experience, such as job shadowing, team meetings, self-evaluation, informal mentoring, online discussion groups, and professional networks.

The development of an early years and childcare qualification framework which recognises both qualification achievement, the attainment of smaller units of learning, both accredited and non-accredited, and the recognition of practice experience would support career progression and ensure staff felt valued for all efforts made to develop their knowledge understanding and abilities in providing better outcomes for children and families.

## Playwork

The PlayBoard School Aged Childcare State of the Sector Survey (2024) notes 87% of respondents identified qualifications as being the single most important

aspect of quality delivery. The report indicates a number of barriers to accessing playwork qualifications which echoes some of the issues referenced in this report.

A school aged childcare level 3 Award in Transition to Playwork (from Early Years) was created to allow those with an early learning and childcare qualification to work in both early years and school aged childcare settings. This has been reasonably successful to support those staff working across and within both early years and playwork settings

143 staff responses specifically identified themselves as playworkers when asked about positions held, however, the majority of these staff held early years and childcare qualifications. Only 24 staff listed as a playworker held specific playwork qualifications. 100 staff overall held playwork specific qualifications.

The PlayBoard School Aged Childcare State of the Sector Survey (2024) also referenced 219 staff with playwork specific qualifications ranging from Level 2 – degree level or above. Even so, some Awarding Organisations have stopped delivering Playwork qualifications in NI because of the lack of demand even though these are still referenced as the most appropriate qualification for out of school provision in the Minimum Standards.

PlayBoard's survey also identified 59 staff who required access to playwork qualifications. Playwork qualifications and transition modules should be funded and made readily available to support career progression.

### **Health and Social Care**

The audit identified 43 staff who held health and social care qualifications.

Health and social care qualifications are not explicitly referenced in Minimum Standards; therefore consideration may need to be given to mapping the content of these qualifications to the CCLD qualifications or the development of refresher training or transitional modules to support career development.

### **Irish Immersion**

176 respondents indicated that they worked within an Irish Medium setting. The qualification audit did not ask or reflect the specific need for access to qualifications or training specific to Irish immersion which may have been an oversight as there are specific units of learning within the existing CCLD suite of units which many staff have competed. Altram has received funding from the DE to develop more specific units of learning in association with the Open College



Network (OCN). This will be a welcome addition, though continued funding would need to be provided to support access to these new units to embed this learning in practice.

## **Preschool**

601 Staff indicated they worked within the DE Pre-school Education Programme. The majority of staff 54% were qualified to level 5 or above, 48% held qualifications at levels 2-4.

TransformED Response by the Department of Education to the Strategic Review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum (July 2025) references and accepts Recommendation 7 which outlines the need to “Engage early years experts to design a 0-6 Early Years Northern Ireland framework setting out broad expectations of development in different domains, which extends and brings together in one continuum the separate documents that exist for different age-groups of young children in Northern Ireland currently.”

The report also states that the new framework will build on the existing Pre-School Education Programme, Foundation Stage Curricular Guidance, the Education and Training Inspectorate’s (ETI) Empowering Improvement – New Framework for Inspection and the Department of Health Minimum Standards for Daycare and Childminding.

All of these initiatives will have implications for training and qualification development going forward.

## **Review of Qualifications**

The National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Childcare Learning and Development and Health and Social Care are currently being reviewed on a UK basis. The NOS are important on a number of levels but, most importantly, because they are a set of standards, of knowledge and skills, that workers are expected to meet in order to practice competently, safely and effectively in their field of work. The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) is leading on the overall 2024/2025 UK review, and the Northern Ireland Social Care Council is leading on the review in Northern Ireland.

The current Children’s Care Learning and Development (CCLD) qualifications referenced in the Minimum Standards were last reviewed in 2018/19. The updated NOS will be of real benefit to any future planned review of the CCLD qualifications or other early years qualifications including the develop of



accredited short courses e.g. a Step up to Management Programme to ensure they are fit for purpose.

## **Gender**

In terms of gender, as expected the majority of staff responses (5283) were female. Students and apprentices were also mainly female, though the survey picked up 5 male students and 1 male apprentice which is encouraging.

A larger number of men in the early years sector will provide children with both female and male role models to guide them in their formative years. Workforce strategies should take a coordinated approach, to create a new gender-aware generation where a choice of a career in childcare would not be unusual for men. To do this it is necessary for learners to witness more men in roles with young children. A bank of case studies could be developed to support targeted recruitment. It may be worth considering specific men in childcare recruitment campaigns within the Apprenticeship NI and Childcare Academy programmes moving forward. The Labour Market Partnership initiative in NI has recently carried out some work on targeting specific ethnic groups to support workforce diversity. A real benefit of this ground up approach at local council and regional level is that local knowledge and learning gained can be used to address current challenges to seeking employment which will inform workforce planning going forward.

## **Experience Levels**

Findings relating to the range of experience staff held indicated that the highest percentage of respondents 30% had less than 1 years' experience. This may in part be due to the current recruitment crisis in early years and childcare and associated staff turnover. 78% of respondents in the PlayBoard School Aged Childcare State of the Sector Survey (2024) reported challenges in the recruitment and retention of staff. It also referenced the drift of experienced staff out of the sector.

Given these findings and the findings within this report there is a clear need for ongoing access to practice support through coaching and mentoring to build capacity knowledge and embed learning gained to ensure understanding and relevance to practice. Funding should be provided for those more experienced staff to train as a work-based coach, mentor or assessor to support the more unexperienced practitioner.

More experienced early years and childcare staff should also be offered opportunities to utilise their knowledge and practice experience by progressing into other roles including early-years childcare or playwork advisors' specialists, teachers, researchers, or inspectors.

### **Age Range**

The survey indicated that the majority of staff (53%) were aged 18-34. 21% of those were 18-24. The audit also picked up 10 staff who were under 18 years of age.

The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2 Family Support, Childminding and Day Care (page 58) states that: "only exceptionally can people under 18 (see HSS CC2/99) be regarded as staff."

This can be a barrier in regard to progression for those embarking on traineeship and apprenticeship programmes. Further discussion regarding providing some flexibility on this issue would be useful given the current recruitment difficulties.

## **7. Way forward and key recommendations**

There is a need in Northern Ireland to develop a coordinated workforce development plan for early years and childcare services, as part of the Early Learning and Childcare Strategy, to ensure there are the appropriate number of early years and childcare practitioners with the appropriate knowledge and skills to work across the various group-based settings at all levels within the sector.

The workforce development plan should aim high, incrementally work towards the achievement of a graduate-led workforce and provide guidance on relevant minimum qualification requirements including induction and foundation training requirements.

The plan should also include a public recruitment campaign which aims to raise the profile of early years and childcare roles, referencing these roles as valuable and professional, and should include reference to an established career framework which includes leadership development opportunities. The plan should endeavour to build a more gender-balanced and diverse workforce. Consideration should also be given to those in inspection, mentoring and training roles and support for employers who facilitate practice and training placements.

Engagement with schools, other further and higher education colleges, work coaches, careers advisors and key stakeholders should be enhanced to promote early years and childcare as a valued professional career option for both school leavers and those wishing to return to employment.

Attracting new entrants with the ability to demonstrate or acquire an appropriate level of knowledge, skills and behaviour will be critical to ensuring the delivery of high-quality care and development for children.

Careers advisors should ensure that young people are presented with a realistic picture of the opportunities and challenges of working in childcare.

On entry staff should have access to a structured induction programme which embeds the ethos of lifelong learning and professional development.

Career pathways within the early years and childcare sector should be clearly defined, with clear progression routes to the wider children's services sector, education system and youth sector mapped, recognising connections between early years, childcare, play care, teaching, social work, speech and language therapy, Sure Start and family support. New entrants need to understand how

their role can impact and connect with a larger support structure for children as they progress through their early years.

The Labour Market Partnership initiative funded by the Department for Communities and the Assured Skills Academy models funded by the Department for the Economy are positive interventions to upskill individuals to help them enter the early years and childcare workforce. To support these programmes, refresher training should be developed for those who have left the sector to support re-entry.

Consideration should be given to the co-design of agreed, consistent terminology used to describe early years roles and responsibilities, to ensure that the work carried out within childcare settings is recognised and valued by all stakeholders.

The audit process has identified a need for a more streamlined digital process to gather workforce data, as part of the HSC Trust registration and inspection process.

Implementing the recommendations in this report will not only strengthen process and access issues but also foster a culture of professionalism, enable staff to feel valued and recognised for the role they play in promoting better outcomes for children and families. A commitment to quality and ongoing personal and professional development is evident from the data collated and reflects a firm foundation for growth.

The development of a new Early Learning and Childcare Strategy for Northern Ireland provides real opportunity to address some of the issues identified in this report.

The authors of this report would like to thank all the participants who contributed to this audit, including the stakeholder advisory group, HSC Trust representatives, the CCP information team, and especially all those early years and childcare providers who, without their assistance and contributions, this research would not have been possible.

## Key Recommendations

1. Options to develop a digital database of registration and inspection related information to inform regional qualification and training audits and broader workforce plans should be explored. This system should allow settings to update their own records easily, reducing the time currently required to report manually to HSC Trusts;
2. Consideration should be given to collecting data through the current inspection process on the ethnicity of the workforce and developing and funding strategies for attracting individuals who identify as people from ethnic minority backgrounds to careers in early years and childcare;
3. An early years and childcare qualification framework should be developed to inform career progression from point of entry to include formal qualification and informal training pathways and recognition of experience;
4. A process for reviewing and mapping existing and new qualifications should be agreed both nationally and internationally on an on-going basis to support the recruitment and inspection process;
5. A system for recognition and accreditation of prior learning and experience should be established;
6. Approaches and supports available for those staff wishing to move into leadership roles should be reviewed and assessed;
7. The revised Childcare Learning and Development and Playwork National Occupational Standards should be used to review the current Children's Care Learning and Development and Playwork qualifications to ensure they reflect workforce requirements, practice advancements, legislative requirements and regulatory changes;
8. An accredited induction programme for early years and childcare should be developed, which is transferrable at level 2. This programme should be coproduced with employers, training providers and awarding organisations;
9. Existing funding streams should be reviewed to ensure they facilitate access to qualification and training bursaries for those entering the sector with no relevant qualifications and those wishing to advance their career;

10. Consideration should be given to extending mandatory training requirements in the DoH Minimum Standards to include disability awareness;
11. A coaching and mentoring programme should be developed for experienced staff to help embed learning in practice for those less experienced staff;
12. Access to playwork qualifications should be promoted and facilitated to further embed the playwork principles in practice;
13. A 'whole system' approach to recruitment and continuous professional development in early years and childcare should be implemented, centrally coordinated and communicated across government departments to provide value for money and avoid duplication of effort; and
14. Traineeship, apprenticeship programmes, childcare and assured skills academies and other earn as you learn models should be promoted to potential new entrants.

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## 9. APPENDICIES

### Appendix 1: Full list of qualifications held by staff in registered group-based settings

Level	Qualification
Level 2	Award In Child Development And Care
Level 2	Award in Employment Responsibilities and Rights in Health, Social Care and Children and Young Peoples Settings
Level 2	Award in Support Work in Schools
Level 2	BTEC Certificate in Childcare
Level 2	BTEC First Diploma in Early Years
Level 2	BTEC National Diploma in Childhood Studies Nursery Nursing
Level 2	Caring for Children and Young People
Level 2	Certificate in Caring for Children 0 - 7 years
Level 2	Certificate in Childcare and Education
Level 2	Certificate in Playgroup Practice
Level 2	Certificate in Playwork
Level 2	Child Development
Level 2	Childcare
Level 2	Childcare and Education
Level 2	Children's Care, Play Learning and Development: Core
Level 2	Children's Care, Play Learning and Development: Practice
Level 2	Children's Care, Learning and Development
Level 2	City & Guilds Caring for Children 0-7yrs
Level 2	Diploma for Children's Care, Learning & Development
Level 2	Diploma for Early Years Practitioner
Level 2	Diploma in Childcare & Education
Level 2	Diploma in Nursery Nursing (NNEB)
Level 2	Diploma in Nursery Nursing (NNEB) Preliminary
Level 2	Diploma in Playwork
Level 2	Early Years Care and Education
Level 2	Early Years Development
Level 2	Early Years Practitioner
Level 2	First Diploma in Health and Social Care
Level 2	Food Hygiene and Safety
Level 2	GCE Advanced Level Double Award in Health and Social Care
Level 2	GCSE
Level 2	GCSE Child Development
Level 2	GCSE Childcare
Level 2	Health and Social Care
Level 2	Level 2 Youth Work
Level 2	Mentoring Practice

Level 2	NVC Childcare
Level 2	Play Environment and Physical Care of Babies
Level 2	Playwork
Level 2	Practical Caring Skills
Level 2	Supporting Individuals with Learning Difficulties
Level 2	Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools
Level 2	Teaching /Classroom Assistants - NVQ
Level 3	A Level Childcare
Level 3	A Level Double Award Health and Social Care
Level 3	A Level in Child Development
Level 3	A level in Childrens Care, Learning & Development
Level 3	A Level in Health and Social Care
Level 3	A Levels
Level 3	A Levels in Sociology, Geography and English
Level 3	Advanced Health and Social Care
Level 3	Award in Childcare and Education
Level 3	BTEC Extended Certificate in Health and Social Care
Level 3	BTEC Health and Social Care
Level 3	BTEC National Award in Children's Care, Learning & Development
Level 3	BTEC National Certificate
Level 3	BTEC National Certificate in Care
Level 3	BTEC National Certificate in Caring Services Nursery Nursing
Level 3	BTEC National Certificate in Childhood Studies Nursery Nursing
Level 3	BTEC National Certificate in Childrens Care Learning and Development
Level 3	BTEC National Certificate in Early Years
Level 3	BTEC National Diploma Childhood Studies
Level 3	BTEC National Diploma in Caring Services Nursery Nursing
Level 3	BTEC National Diploma in Childcare and Education
Level 3	BTEC National Diploma in Childhood Studies Nursery Nursing
Level 3	BTEC National Diploma in Children, Young People And Adults
Level 3	BTEC National Diploma in Childrens Care Learning and Development
Level 3	BTEC National Diploma in Early Years
Level 3	BTEC National Diploma in Health and Social Care
Level 3	BTEC National Diploma in Science Nursery Nursing
Level 3	BTEC National Extended Diploma in Health & Social Care
Level 3	BTEC National in Caring Services
Level 3	Caring for children and young people
Level 3	Certificate in Caring for Children 0 - 7 years
Level 3	Certificate in Childcare and Education
Level 3	Certificate in Nursery Nursing
Level 3	Certificate in Playwork
Level 3	Certificate in Supporting Teaching and learning in Schools (RQF)
Level 3	Certificate in Work with Children
Level 3	Certificate of Higher Education in Childcare
Level 3	Certificate of Higher Education in Early Childhood Studies

Level 3	Certificate of Higher Education in Early Years
Level 3	Certificate of Higher Education in Early Years Practice
Level 3	Childcare
Level 3	Childcare and Education
Level 3	Childcare Development
Level 3	Children's Care, Play Learning and Development: Practice
Level 3	Children's Care, Learning and Development
Level 3	Diploma Children's Care Learning and Development Extended
Level 3	Diploma for Children's Care, Learning & Development
Level 3	Diploma for Specialist Support for Teaching and Learning in School
Level 3	Diploma for the Children and Young People's Workforce (Early Learning and Childcare)
Level 3	Diploma in Childcare
Level 3	Diploma in Childcare & Education
Level 3	Diploma in Childcare, Learning & Development
Level 3	Diploma in Early Years
Level 3	Diploma in Health and Social Care
Level 3	Diploma in Health and Social Care Extended
Level 3	Diploma in Modern Montessori Teaching with Distinction
Level 3	Diploma in Montessori Teaching
Level 3	Diploma in Nursery Nursing (NNEB)
Level 3	Diploma in Nursery Nursing Integrated Scheme
Level 3	Diploma in Playwork
Level 3	Diploma in Specialist Support for Teaching and Learning in Schools
Level 3	Early Childhood Care and Education
Level 3	Early Years Care and Education
Level 3	Early Years Educator
Level 3	General Certificate in Education
Level 3	Health and Social Care
Level 3	ILM level 3 Award in Leadership and Management
Level 3	NCC Certificate in Child Development
Level 3	NCC Child Care and Education
Level 3	Oplex Award in Childcare
Level 3	Playwork
Level 3	Playwork in a Youth Work Setting
Level 3	Practical Caring Skills
Level 3	Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools
Level 3	SVQ in Social Services (Children and Young people)
Level 3	Teaching /Classroom Assistants - NVQ
Level 4	Advance Practice in Early Years Education
Level 4	Advanced Certificate in Playwork
Level 4	Advanced Diploma in Childcare and Education
Level 4	BTEC Higher National Certificate in Health Care Practice
Level 4	Certificate in Working with Parents
Level 4	Certificate of Higher Education in Childcare and Education

Level 4	Certificate of Higher Education in Early Years
Level 4	Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development - Professional Practice
Level 4	Children's Care, Learning and Development
Level 4	Diploma Children's Care Learning and Development Extended
Level 4	Diploma in Leadership & Management
Level 4	Diploma in Theory and Practice of the Montessori Method of Education
Level 4	Diploma of Higher Education in Early Childhood Studies
Level 4	Early Years Care and Education
Level 4	Higher National Certificate Early Years Practice
Level 4	Higher National Certificate in Childcare
Level 4	Higher National Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Care
Level 4	Higher National Certificate in Early Childhood Studies
Level 4	Higher National Certificate in Early years
Level 4	Higher National Certificate in Early Years Practice
Level 4	Higher National Certificate in Health and Social care
Level 4	ILM Level 4 Leadership & Management
Level 5	Advanced Certificate Supervision in Childcare
Level 5	BS Early Childhood care & Education
Level 5	BTEC Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families
Level 5	Diploma in Leadership for Children's Care Learning and Development (Advanced Practice)
Level 5	Diploma in Leadership for Children's Care Learning and Development (Management)
Level 5	Diploma in Leadership for the Children and Young People's Workforce - Early Years (Advanced Practice)
Level 5	Diploma in Leadership for the Children and Young People's Workforce - Early Years (Management)
Level 5	Diploma in Playwork
Level 5	Diploma of Higher Education in Childcare
Level 5	Diploma of Higher Education in Early Childhood Studies
Level 5	Diploma of Higher Education in Early Years
Level 5	Diploma of Higher Education in Early Years Practice
Level 5	Diploma of Higher Education in Playwork
Level 5	Early Childhood Care and Education
Level 5	Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) - QQI Level 6 - ROI
Level 5	Early Learning Environment
Level 5	Foundation Degree in Childcare
Level 5	Foundation Degree in Early Childhood Studies
Level 5	Foundation Degree in Early Years
Level 5	Foundation Degree in Health & Social Care
Level 5	Foundation Degree in Playwork
Level 5	Higher Diploma in Education
Level 5	Higher National Diploma in Care Practice Childcare Element
Level 5	Higher National Diploma in Childcare
Level 5	Higher National Diploma in Childhood Studies

Level 5	Higher National Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care
Level 5	Higher National Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care (Education)
Level 5	Higher National Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care (Leadership and Management)
Level 5	Higher National Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care (Social and Community Care Practice)
Level 5	Higher National Diploma in Early Childhood Studies
Level 5	Higher National Diploma in Early Years
Level 5	Higher National Diploma in Early Years Practice
Level 5	Higher National Diploma in Playwork
Level 5	Higher National Diploma in Social Work
Level 5	Special Needs Assisting
Level 6	BA Degree in Montessori Education
Level 6	BA Early Childhood Studies
Level 6	BA Education
Level 6	BA Education Studies and Early Childhood Education
Level 6	BA Hons Applied Social Care
Level 6	BA Hons Childhood Development and Playwork
Level 6	BA Hons Childhood Studies
Level 6	BA Hons Children & Young People's Learning and Development
Level 6	BA Hons degree in Early Childhood Education and care
Level 6	BA Hons Degree in Early Years
Level 6	BA Hons Early Years and Childhood Studies
Level 6	Ba Hons Education and Early Years
Level 6	BA Hons in Childhood Youth Studies
Level 6	BA Hons in Early Childhood Care and Education
Level 6	BA Hons in Early Childhood Studies
Level 6	BA Hons In Education
Level 6	BA Hons in Education Study (Primary)
Level 6	BA Hons in Geography
Level 6	BA Hons in Mathematics with Qualified Teaching Status
Level 6	BA Hons in Youth and Community Work
Level 6	BA Hons Nursing
Level 6	BA Hons Primary Education
Level 6	BA Hons Primary Education with QTS
Level 6	BA Hons Primary Education with Science
Level 6	BA Hons Professional Practice-Early Education
Level 6	BA Hons Working with Children & Families in the Early Years
Level 6	BA Hons Young Children & Early Childhood
Level 6	BA in Applied Early Childhood Studies
Level 6	BA in Childcare and Youth Studies
Level 6	BA in Early Childhood Care and Education
Level 6	BA in Education and Childhood Studies
Level 6	BA In Education Studies And Early Years
Level 6	BA Studies Education

Level 6	Bachelor of Education
Level 6	Bachelor of Social Work
Level 6	B.Ed. Hons Education
Level 6	B.Ed. Primary Degree Course
Level 6	BSc (Hons) in Early Childhood Care, Health & Education
Level 6	BSc Hons Criminology
Level 6	BSC Hons Early Childhood Care Health And Education
Level 6	BSc Hons Health and Social Care Policy
Level 6	BSc Hons Human Communication
Level 6	BSc Hons in Early Childhood Care and Education
Level 6	BSc Hons in Early Childhood Care, Health & Education
Level 6	BSC Hons Professional Development in Nursing
Level 6	BSc Hons Social Psychology
Level 6	BSC in Childhood Studies
Level 6	BSc in Geography (Major) with Education (Minor)
Level 6	BSc in Nursing
Level 6	Childrens Nursing Qualification
Level 6	Degree
Level 6	Diploma in the Advanced Study of Education (Early Years Education)
Level 6	Early Years Degree
Level 6	Early years Montessori Teacher
Level 6	Early Years Teacher Status
Level 6	Graduate Diploma in Playwork
Level 6	Hons Degree in Sociology
Level 6	Occupational Qualification in Nursing and relevant 2 years' experience working in a play, education, youth, or day-care setting
Level 6	Occupational Qualification in Social Work and relevant 2 years' experience working in a play, education, youth, or day-care setting
Level 6	Occupational Qualification in Teaching and relevant 2 years' experience working in a play, education, youth, or day-care setting
Level 6	Playwork Degree
Level 6	Postgraduate in Modern Languages: French and Spanish
Level 6	Postgraduate Primary
Level 6	Postgraduate Primary Education
Level 6	Postgraduate Secondary Science / Professional Qualification for Headship
Level 6	Supervision & Management in Childcare
Level 7	BTEC Strategic Management and Leadership
Level 7	Early Childhood Education with Qualified Teacher Status
Level 7	MA Professional Studies in Childrens Play
Level 7	Master of Education (MEd) Diploma in Advanced Studies in Education (DASE)
Level 7	Master of Science Applied Behaviour Analysis
Level 7	Masters Early Childhood Studies
Level 7	Masters in Child Psychology
Level 7	Masters in Childcare and Youth Studies.
Level 7	Masters of Education

Level 7	MSc Childhood Adversity
Level 7	MSc. Voluntary Sector Management
Level 7	Postgraduate Certificate in Early Childhood Studies
Level 7	Postgraduate Certificate in Early Years Education (3-8 years)
Level 7	Postgraduate Certificate in inclusion and special needs education
Level 7	Postgraduate Certificate in Integrated Childrens Services
Level 7	Postgraduate Diploma in Early Childhood Studies
Level 7	Postgraduate Diploma in Education
Level 7	Postgraduate Early Years & Primary
Level 7	Postgraduate in Early Years with Early Years Professional Status
Level 7	Postgraduate in Play Therapy
Level 7	Postgraduate Certificate in Integrated Childrens Services
Level 8	Doctorate in Childhood Studies
Level 8	Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Management



## Appendix 2: List of qualifications staff were working towards

Level	Qualifications
Level 2	BTEC First Diploma in Childrens Care Learning and Development
Level 2	Caring for Children and Young People
Level 2	Certificate in Childcare and Education
Level 2	Childcare and Education
Level 2	Children's Care Learning and Development
Level 2	Children's Care, Play Learning and Development: Core
Level 2	Children's Care, Play Learning and Development: Practice
Level 2	Diploma in Childcare and Education
Level 2	Diploma in Playwork
Level 2	Early Years Care and Education
Level 2	Working with Children with Special Needs
Level 3	BTEC National Certificate in Childrens Care Learning and Development
Level 3	BTEC National Diploma in Childcare and Education
Level 3	BTEC national Diploma in Childrens Care Learning and Development
Level 3	Certificate in Playwork
Level 3	Childcare and Education
Level 3	Children's Care Learning and Development
Level 3	Children's Care, Play Learning and Development: Practice
Level 3	Diploma Children's Care Learning and Development
Level 3	Diploma Children's Care Learning and Development Extended
Level 3	Diploma for the Children and Young People's Workforce (Early Learning and Childcare)
Level 3	Diploma in Childcare and Education
Level 3	Diploma in Children's Care, Learning and Development
Level 3	Diploma in Playwork
Level 3	Early Years Care and Education
Level 3	Early Years Educator
Level 4	Certificate of Higher Education in Early Childhood Studies
Level 4	Higher National Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Care
Level 5	Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development - Leadership and Management
Level 5	Diploma in Leadership for Children's Care Learning and Development (Management)
Level 5	Diploma in Playwork

Level 5	Foundation Degree in Early Childhood Studies
Level 5	Foundation Degree in Early Years
Level 5	Foundation Degree in Health and Social Care
Level 6	BA Hons Early Childhood Studies
Level 6	B.Ed. Primary Degree Course
Level 6	B.Ed. Primary Degree Course Hons
Level 6	BS Hons Degree in Irish Language and Literature
Level 6	Degree in Children's Nursing
Level 7	Postgraduate Certificate in Early Years Education (PGCE) (3-8 years)



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