

Playwork qualifications and careers

NORTHERN IRELAND



SkillsActive
More People, Better Skilled, Better Qualified

An introduction to playwork qualifications and careers in Northern Ireland

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What is play?

All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and well-being of individuals and communities.

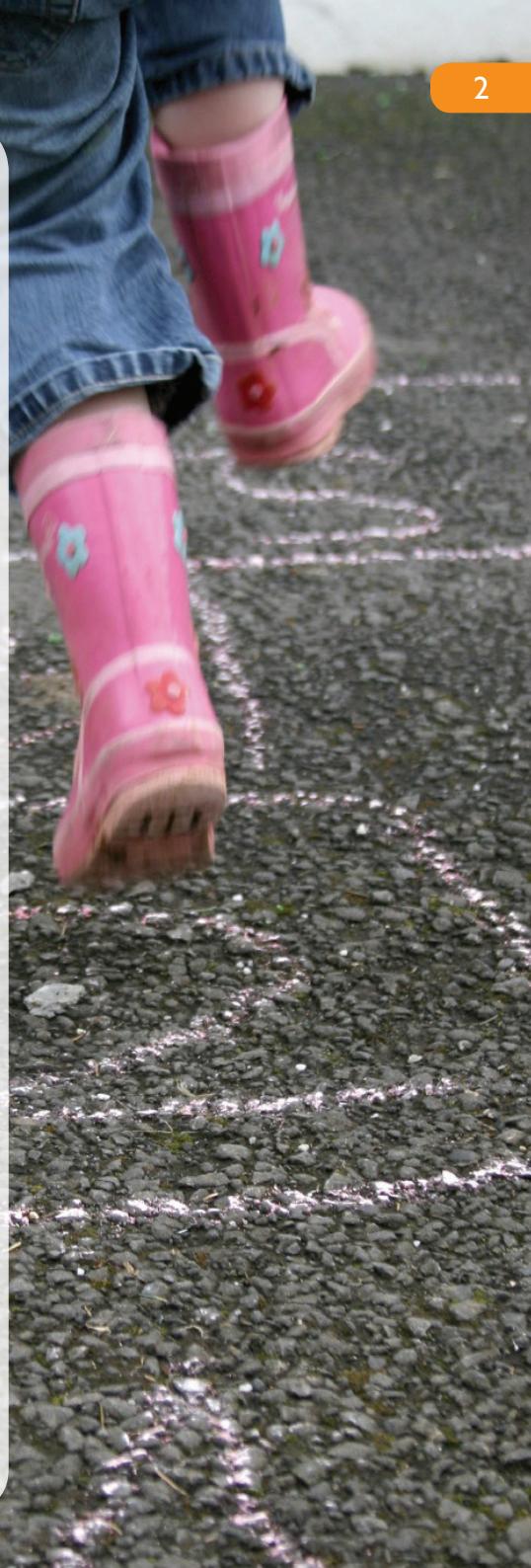
Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.

The Playwork Principles 2004

What is playwork?

The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process. For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging in adult-led agendas. The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.

The Playwork Principles 2004



Playwork within the children's workforce

There is growing recognition and understanding of the importance of investing in children and young people. In recent times the interest and understanding of the value of play has gained momentum. The value of play has been debated in social policy and is increasingly seen as a key driver in terms of meeting outcomes.

This is evidenced in the emergence of policy frameworks that support integrated children's services . This new vision of integrated services throughout childhood requires a programme of reform and sustained investment across the age range. Consistent with Northern Ireland's skills strategy 'Success Through Skills' this means that thousands of qualified workers will be required to create a children's profession based on a more unified qualifications and skills framework. This will support a more coordinated approach between professions, more flexible career paths and less fragmented services for children and families.



Where do playworkers work?

Playwork takes place in a variety of settings including childcare, daycare and youth work settings. Playwork can also be facilitated in specialist settings such as hospitals, refuges, extended school provision, children's homes and prisons. Playwork can be taken to outdoor environments e.g. via play rangers and mobile play provision. Play happens inevitably in out-of-school provision.

Setting	Role
Daycare setting	Playworker
	Childcare worker
School aged childcare	Playworker
	Childcare worker
Youth club	Youth worker
	Playworker
	Play ranger
	Childcare worker
Community centre	Play development officer
	Playworker
	Play ranger
College	Training provider
	Playwork tutor
	Internal verifier
Awarding organisation	External verifier
Home	Child-minder

Progression Pathways in Playwork – England, Wales

Workforce Scenarios	Level 2	Level 3
School leaver with no level 2 qualifications	▶ Level 2 Apprenticeship*	▶ Level 3 Advanced Apprenticeship*
School leaver with 5 GCSEs Grade C	▶	▶ Level 3 Diploma (NVQ) in Playwork/Level 3 Advanced Apprenticeship*
Playworker who is working in a playwork setting with no qualifications in playwork or any other area	▶ Level 2 Diploma (NVQ) in Playwork or Level 2 Apprenticeship*	▶ Level 3 Diploma (NVQ) in Playwork or Level 3 Advanced Apprenticeship*
Playworker who has a level 2 qualification in playwork	▶	▶ Level 3 Diploma (NVQ) in Playwork or Level 3 Advanced Apprenticeship*
Playworker with 2 or 3 A levels but no playwork qualification	▶	▶
Playworker with level 3 playwork qualification	▶	▶
Early years worker with Level 3 Children's Care, Learning & Development (CCLD) or Early Years & Childcare (based on CCLD national occupational standards)	▶	▶ Level 3 Award in Transition to Playwork (from Early Years)
Playworker with a level 5 in playwork as highest qualification	▶	▶
Playworker with degree in playwork as highest qualification	▶	▶
Playworker with non playwork degree as highest qualification	▶	▶
Early years trainer who has Level 3 Children's Care, Learning & Development (CCLD) or Early Years & Childcare (based on CCLD national occupational standards)	▶	▶ Level 3 Award in Transition to Playwork (from Early Years)
Parent or other volunteer working in a playwork setting	▶ Level 2 Award in Playwork/Level 2 Certificate in Playwork/Level 2 Diploma (NVQ) in Playwork	▶ Level 3 Diploma (NVQ) in Playwork

Key to Qualifications

*Apprenticeship: this is the Apprenticeship in Active Leisure, Learning and Well-Being (playwork pathway).

Diploma (NVQ): so-called as it contains assessment of performance against agreed standards and, through this, provides evidence that the holder is occupationally competent.

Playwork Foundation Degree (FdA): comprises work based learning with some taught sessions usually in a college or university, at level 5.

Certificate of Higher Education (HE): equivalent to the first year of an honours degree, at level 4.

Diploma of Higher Education (HE): equivalent to the second year of an honours degree, at level 5.

Higher Education, Level 4 and above

- ▶ Level 4 Certificate in Playwork/Level 5 Diploma (NVQ) in Playwork/Level 4 Certificate of HE Playwork/Level 5 Foundation Degree in Playwork/Level 5 Diploma of HE Playwork/Level 6 BA(Hons) Playwork/Level 6 Graduate Diploma in Playwork
- ▶ Level 4 Certificate in Playwork/Level 5 Diploma (NVQ) in Playwork/Level 4 Certificate of HE Playwork/Level 5 Foundation Degree in Playwork/Level 5 Diploma of HE Playwork/Level 6 BA(Hons) Playwork/Level 6 Graduate Diploma in Playwork
- ▶ Level 4 Certificate in Playwork/Level 5 Diploma (NVQ) in Playwork/Level 4 Certificate of HE Playwork/Level 5 Foundation Degree in Playwork/Level 5 Diploma of HE Playwork/Level 6 BA(Hons) Playwork/Level 6 Graduate Diploma in Playwork
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- ▶ Level 4 Certificate in Playwork/Level 5 Diploma (NVQ) in Playwork/Level 4 Certificate of HE Playwork/Level 5 Foundation Degree in Playwork/Level 5 Diploma of HE Playwork/Level 6 BA(Hons) Playwork/Level 6 Graduate Diploma in Playwork
- ▶ Level 6 BA(Hons) Playwork/Level 6 Graduate Diploma in Playwork/Level 7 Post Graduate Certificate In Playwork/Masters in Playwork
- ▶ Level 7 Post Graduate Certificate/Masters Degree in Playwork
- ▶ Level 6 Graduate Diploma in Playwork/Level 7 Post Graduate Certificate in Playwork/Masters in Playwork
- ▶ Level 4 Certificate in Playwork/Level 5 Diploma (NVQ) in Playwork/Level 4 Certificate of HE Playwork/Level 5 Foundation Degree in Playwork/Level 5 Diploma of HE Playwork/Level 6 BA(Hons) Playwork/Level 6 Graduate Diploma in Playwork
- ▶ Level 4 Certificate in Playwork/Level 5 Diploma (NVQ) in Playwork/Level 4 Certificate of HE Playwork/Level 5 Foundation Degree in Playwork/Level 5 Diploma of HE Playwork/Level 6 BA(Hons) Playwork/Level 6 Graduate Diploma in Playwork

BA(Hons) Playwork: usually taught in universities, often available part-time, distance learning available, at level 6.

Award in Transition to Playwork (from Early Years): offers knowledge and understanding of playwork but does not prove occupational competence. It is noted that some individuals complete the transitional award without doing any placement at all and undertaking a series of work placements would not necessarily give the required level of playwork experience required to meet occupational competence as defined for assessors and internal verifiers. We strongly recommend all playwork trainers and practitioners have regular face-to-face playwork practice as part of their on-going professional development.

What qualification is best for me?

Purpose of setting: The focus of the setting is a key element in determining what a relevant qualification might be. The aim and focus of the setting will guide what staff do. For example a setting with a focus on education may ask for a childcare qualification while a setting that focuses on play and promoting play is likely to ask for a playwork qualification.

Age range: Another important factor is the age range of children attending the setting. Childcare qualifications cover a broad age range of 0 to 16, but you may focus on one age range when completing course work in order to provide evidence for the qualification. This may not provide the relevant experience or knowledge for the older age range and therefore not be suitable for a play or out of school setting.

What is an employer looking for? There are a number of things that an employer is looking for including relevant qualifications, suitable experience of working with children and young people, an ability to work alone and as part of a team, good interpersonal skills, an ability to communicate with parents and someone who likes children and young people and understands the challenges that come with this.



Examples of playwork qualifications

- NVQ Playwork level 2
- NVQ Playwork level 3
- NVQ Playwork level 4
- Award/ Certificate / Diploma in Playwork – Level 2
- Award/ Certificate / Diploma in Playwork – Level 3
- Level 3 Award in Playwork for early years and childcare Workers (Transitional Modules)
- Honours degree in playwork

Playwork qualifications cover a range of topics from supporting play to health and safety. A playwork qualification is often made up of a number of mandatory units and optional units. Some of the topics include:

- Developing and promoting positive relationships in the play setting
- Reflecting on and developing practice
- Supporting children and young people' play
- Contributing to the work of your team
- Developing and maintaining a healthy, safe and secure environment for children



Job profiles

Level 2 is for those who are working, or will be working, under supervision, with children and young people. A level 2 candidate will be involved in contributing to the planning and running of play area and play opportunities. This role also involves working as part of a team, ensuring that the area and play opportunities are suitable to the age range and meet the setting's policies and procedures. Level 2 is appropriate for those with no previous qualifications. Training providers will carry out a candidate assessment to ensure that this is a suitable qualification for you prior to commencing the qualification.

If you hold a level 2 qualification, such as an NVQ, certificate or diploma in playwork, you could work as an assistant playworker in a variety of settings.

Working at a level 2 position you can expect to be paid from minimum wage up to approximately £7.50 per hour.

Level 3 is for those who already have a level 2 qualification or have significant experience in a play setting. This role involves coordinating play opportunities, promoting play in the setting and beyond, administrative tasks such as managing income from fees or writing letters to parents about special events, and supervising other staff in the team. If you hold a level 3 qualification you could work as a manager in a setting.

Working at a level 3 position you can expect to be paid between £7.00 and £10.00 per hour.

Level 4 is aimed at those who manage a number of playwork settings. This qualification covers areas such as reflection and development of good practice, the development of organisational frameworks and reviewing operations. If you hold a level 4 qualification you may move to a developmental role such as play development officer.

A play development officer can earn from around £16,000 to £25,000 per year.

As with rates of pay, working hours and benefits such as holidays can vary from setting to setting. How the setting is funded will also have an impact on rates of pay and working conditions.

Examples of Northern Ireland playwork and childcare qualifications

There is a huge range of qualifications available to those wishing to work with children and young people and for those wishing to progress within this area. In many instances playworkers migrate from service to service, that is, a playworker may be employed in a pre-school or school in the morning, an after school club in the late afternoon and a youth service in the evening. These playworkers are often referred to as portfolio workers.

When deciding what qualification is for you there are a number of things to consider. The points below will help you to focus on what setting you are thinking about working in along with the age range and type of setting. When considering between playwork and childcare it may be helpful to consider the purpose of both.

Playwork – This qualification is for you if you work in a setting or service whose main purpose is providing children and young people with opportunities for freely chosen self directed play.

For a list of playwork qualifications, see the SkillsActive Active Passport website: <http://www.playworkactivepassport.com/SectorSkills/UserSearch.asp>

Children's Care, Learning and Development (CCLD) – This qualification is for you if you work in a setting or service whose main purpose is the care, learning and development of children.

For a list of childcare qualifications see the Northern Ireland Social Care Council
www.niscc.info

Find a course

You can access local opportunities for learning to suit your lifestyle full-time or part-time, day or evening, learning at home or in the workplace in Northern Ireland by searching www.careersserviceni.com/CourseSearch/index.aspx

If you would like to speak to a trained adviser about suitable learning call learndirect FREE on 0800 100 900

The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)

The QCF is a new framework which sets out how all regulated vocational qualifications should be structured, titled and quality assured. The QCF will replace the National Qualifications Framework and will recognise achievement through giving successful learners credit points for units and qualifications gained. There are nine levels from entry to level 8. The level of a unit/qualification indicates how 'difficult' it is.

Sector skills councils are currently revising qualifications to be placed on the QCF by the end of 2010. Awarding organisations will use the standards to develop new qualifications for the QCF. This is currently taking place.

More information on careers and qualifications can be found on the following websites:

www.skillsactive.com

www.qcda.gov.uk/qualifications/60.aspx

www.delni.gov.uk

www.ccea.org.uk

www.cache.org.uk

www.cityandguilds.com/qcf

www.playboard.org

Contact details and website addresses

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