

The Level 5 Early Years Lead Practitioner Apprenticeship Standard

This apprenticeship standard was developed by the Early Years Higher Education Trailblazer Group. The Trailblazer Group is chaired by Laura Upton; group members are Owners, Managers, Leaders and Practitioners currently working in practice in early years settings, the group is supported by sector experts including course leaders and tutors currently delivering a range of early years qualifications.

The Trailblazer Group first came together on the 8th December 2017 with a view to designing a higher-level apprenticeship for the sector; to tackle the growing recruitment and retention crisis and elevate the professionalism of the Early Years Sector. The Trailblazer Group recognised that the sector is full of confusing and misleading information, qualifications, awards and certificates which has led to many practitioners undertaking and achieving qualifications that do not provide full and relevant status for delivering the EYFS.

The Department for Education (DfE) defines [which qualifications count as full and relevant when working within the Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\)](#) and at what level they count as in the EYFS staff:child ratio. The EYFS staff:child ratio includes those who are unqualified, those who count as [level 2 because they have achieved \(EYP\) Early Years Practitioner Criteria](#), those who count as [level 3 because they have achieved \(EYE\) Early Years Educator Criteria](#) and those who are level 6. It is important to note that there are only 3 'Statuses' that count as level 6; level 4, 5, 6 and Degree qualifications can only ever count as level 3 in ratio, and only if the qualification meets EYE Criteria.

The Level 5 Early Years Lead Practitioner Apprenticeship standard has been mapped to the 'Early Years Educator Criteria' and is on the [Department for Education list](#) of approved full and relevant qualifications.

Learners and employers can enter onto this apprenticeship with confidence knowing it will provide the full and relevant qualified status essential for a career in the Early Years. This apprenticeship is ideal for someone who already holds a qualification in a similar subject but cannot count in the 'qualified' staff:child ratio, for example they hold a qualification in Health and Social Care or Teaching Assistant. They can now progress upwards through this higher-level apprenticeship rather than undertaking another level 3.

For practitioners in the sector who already hold a level 2 or level 3, this is an excellent progression route, it will develop and enhance their practice and knowledge. Learners wishing to take this route will need to be in a suitable role with an employer who can

support them to gain the knowledge, skills, and behaviours needed to reach the standard required for End Point Assessment. It is important to thoroughly read the Knowledge, Skills, Behaviours and Duties to ensure the practitioner will be able to meet all of these standards; this is imperative in order to pass the End Point Assessment.

The Level 5 Early Years Lead Practitioner Apprenticeship Standard has been designed to enable practitioners to take time to explore more theoretical approaches to working with children and develop a deeper understanding of how children learn, develop and grow. Practitioners undertaking this apprenticeship will focus on their daily role within practice becoming not just amazing practitioners, but also able to lead others through their exemplary practice. This apprenticeship offers the opportunity to explore, reflect on and implement ideas, theories, strategies, and policies directly during their time with the children and share these with others through their leaderful practice. Practitioners undertaking this apprenticeship will understand their role as advocates for children and the importance in feeling capable and competent to perform as an advocate within the setting, within professional relationships, and the wider sector. Practitioners will develop the skills required to feel able to form and articulate their strategies and approaches and this must be underpinned by sound pedagogy. This journey will allow them time to revisit and expand on their knowledge and understanding of key concepts and theories such as attachment, schema, well-being, play and learning. It will require the apprentice to broaden and deepen their understanding of a child's holistic development both individually, within their interactions and within their wider social and cultural context.

Upskilled amazing practitioners have the greatest impact when they work directly with the children all day, every day. Through this daily practice they will help to create the next generation of amazing practitioners by working alongside them rather than organising rotas, invoices and filling in holiday requests. Historically the sector has seen many great practitioners who in their desire and commitment to progress their career have been pushed into a role change which results in them being moved away from working directly with the children to working in management in an office or working with staff. While creating effective leaders and managers is vital to an evolving sector, it means the early years sector holds the view that a long career working with the children relies on a move towards administration and office-based work. The Early Years Professional/Teacher Status was able to challenge this and accredit exemplary practice, however this currently requires practitioners to have completed a degree. This apprenticeship will hopefully be the validation practitioners need to recognise and value their daily work alongside the children in play.

So, who are Early Years Lead Practitioners and what do they look like, what do they do?

Early Years Lead Practitioners should be working alongside their level 2 and level 3 colleagues; sat in the sandpit, helping children learn how to wash their hands, making mud pies, building towers, and sat in a corner chatting with children about their interests and motivations that day. During the apprenticeship their confidence will grow, their understanding will deepen and enhance their analysis and therefore their responses to children. They will be mindful of utilising every experience with the children to enhance their own and their colleagues' practice and take time to reflect both in and on practice whilst supporting others on their journey. They will become a natural leader within their team and a valuable resource for the children, their colleagues, and their team. They will be able to see the world of our children in more definition and with greater understanding, they will develop a range of sensitive and dynamic responses. They will understand a wide range of theories and be able to draw upon these to enhance their own and their colleagues' pedagogical approach and practice. They will be able to advocate for children by confidently articulating to parents, colleagues and multidisciplinary teams strategies and practice to develop and extend children's learning and holistic development. But they will still be playing all day everyday in the sandpit, in the role play kitchen, the book corner and with the same paint, bricks, puzzles and trains as their level 2 and level 3 colleagues!

This apprenticeship has been designed for motivated, excited, and committed practitioners who are driven to know, understand and do more for children every day. It is for practitioners who understand that children's outcomes are directly impacted by the skills and abilities of the practitioners around them and they therefore continually strive to become the best practitioner they can be. This apprenticeship is for them, because they deserve the opportunities it offers and the validation of the amazing role they commit to everyday.

The money bit...

Apprenticeships are funded through [the Apprenticeship Levy](#) if an employer is not a 'Levy' paying organisation then most of the cost of the apprenticeship is government funded and the employer funds 5% typically in monthly installments, the apprentice does not contribute to the cost. The apprentice if already employed continues to be paid their usual salary. If they are a new starter as an apprentice they could be paid the apprenticeship rate of pay.

Entry Requirements

Applicants will need to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service check. Apprentices without level 2 English and maths will need to achieve these prior to End Point Assessment.

Apprentices/Practitioners will always need to hold a Paediatric First Aid Certificate in order to count in the 'qualified' staff:child ratio when delivering the EYFS.

Training Providers and Assessors

This apprenticeship has been designed to be a progression route for early years practitioners to enable and support them to be the best that they can be. Currently the highest status someone can achieve when working in the early years sector is Early Years Teacher Status, for which there is an entry requirement to hold a degree. The Trailblazer Group have developed a robust End Point Assessment (EPA) intended to enable those who pass to be considered onto a degree top up programme as a route to achieving Early Years Teacher Status. Apprentices will need to excel in order to pass the EPA, it shouldn't be 'easy' to pass; apprentices will need to work hard to reach the standard that has been set. The EPA has been developed to create fantastic Early Years Lead Practitioners who will have a positive impact on everyone and every child they work with. They will raise the bar of the early years sector.

A high-quality learning experience should include attendance of classroom style learning, this could be virtual or face to face. When training is only delivered on a 1:1 basis between the tutor and the learner; the depth and breadth of discussion, learning opportunities and the quality of the learning experience is narrowed in comparison to classroom learning alongside peers.

For a high-quality learning experience the tutor/trainer/assessor delivering the learning should be qualified to at least a level higher to the level of qualification/apprenticeship they are delivering. It is important that the tutor/trainer/assessor also has recent and relevant experience of the sector along with a higher level full and relevant qualification. E.g. the tutor/trainer/assessor delivering a Level 5 Early Years Lead Practitioner Apprenticeship should hold at least a full and relevant early years degree, have experience of working in the sector and remain up to date by undertaking regular CPD.