

Introduction

This brochure summarises potential career opportunities within the childcare profession, outlining the different branches of the profession from working at practical level to the support and development of the sector.

Childcare as defined by the Expert Working Group (1999) includes services providing care and education, which are viewed as being complementary and inseparable. The term is used to describe day care facilities and services for pre-school children and school going children out of school hours. It includes services offering care, education and socialization opportunities for children to the benefit of children, parents, employers and the wider community. Thus services such as Preschools, Naíonraí, Day Care Services, Crèches, Nurseries, Playgroups, Childminding and school age childcare services are included. The expert working group also agreed that the age group to be considered would be children aged 0-14 years inclusive.

The use of the term Child Care services in the wider health sector refers to the variety of services for children up to the age of 18 years in need of the care and the protection of the state.

The National Framework of Qualifications

Since 2001 a lot has been happening in Education and Training. It is now recognised that learning does not have to end at a specific age and that people need and want to continue learning for life. In order to support this trend a new National Framework of Qualifications has been developed and will be operational by 2006.

Up to 2001 there were different awarding bodies involved in certifying programmes of education and training. These include FÁS, NCVA, Teagasc, Failte Ireland, NCEA, the Institutes of Technology, DIT and the Universities.

All of these bodies offered opportunities for learners to get qualifications – however it wasn't clear how one award or qualification related to another. This made it difficult for learners to get access to a particular programme, or to transfer from one programme to another as their learning progressed. Also, employers found it difficult to know how one qualification related to another. The National Framework of Qualifications will reduce these barriers for learners and employers.

The outline framework comprises 10 levels and contains an initial set of 15 award types. Each level is based on specific standards of knowledge, skill and competence. The award types shown are known as major awards.

The development of minor, supplemental and special purpose awards is ongoing. The Awarding Bodies are currently devising the structures for these award types. As this happens the range and type of awards available at each level will grow – so too will the routes through which learners can progress.

A key feature of the new awards is that they will be based on learning outcomes (what a learner knows and can do). This will be achieved through assessing the learner's abilities in the chosen award and recognising the level and range of those abilities.

BENEFITS OF THE FRAMEWORK:

The framework will benefit:

- Learners**
 - Who follow a course and get a nationally recognised qualification
 - Who undergo training in their workplace and receive recognition
 - Who achieve an award and use it to progress further
- Providers of Education & Training Courses who want**
 - All learners to have their achievement recognised nationally
 - To offer quality assured courses leading to national awards
 - To create opportunities for progression in education and training
- Employers who want**
 - To understand and compare different types of qualifications
 - To facilitate their staff in upskilling and improving their qualifications

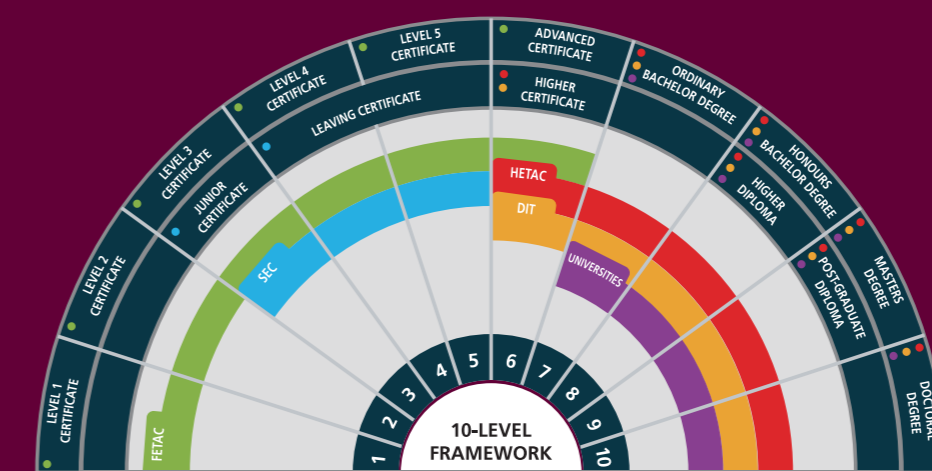
When will change occur?

The National Framework of Qualifications was launched in October 2003 and will be fully implemented by 2006. In the meantime learners want and deserve recognition for their achievements. Education and Training providers need to satisfy the demand from learners for that recognition.

In the further Training and Education sector this means that FETAC is operating several parallel processes until the full implementation of the framework. In this way anybody following FÁS, Teagasc, NCVA or Fáilte Ireland Programmes are receiving FETAC awards for their learning.

For example on completion of a FÁS apprenticeship the learner will receive a FETAC National Craft Certificate (FÁS) whilst students in further education colleges will receive a FETAC National Vocational Certificate (NCVA).

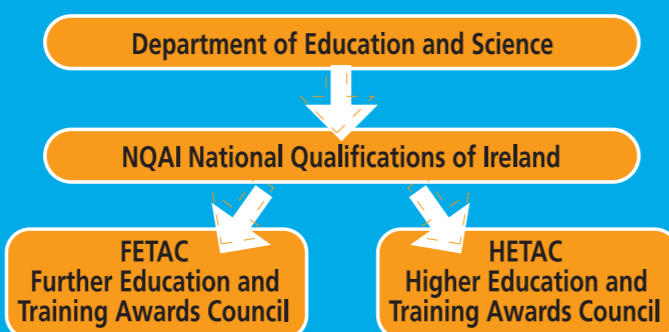
For more information and details contact information@fetac.ie



Examples of Placed Awards

FRAMEWORK LEVEL	FORMER AWARDING BODY	AWARD
Level 1		No existing or former awards at this level
Level 2		No existing or former awards at this level
Level 3	Fáilte Ireland (CERT/NTCB)	Introductory Skills Certificate
	FÁS	Introductory Vocational Skills (IVS)
	NCVA	National Foundation Certificate
Level 4	Fáilte Ireland (CERT/NTCB)	Elementary Skills Certificate
	FÁS	Specific Skills
	FÁS	National Skills Certificate
	NCVA	National Vocational Certificate Level 1
	TEAGASC	Basic Horticultural Skills
Level 5	Fáilte Ireland (CERT/NTCB)	Certificate in Hotel Operations
	FÁS	Specific Skills
	FÁS	National Skills Certificate
	NCEA	Foundation Certificate
	NCVA	National Vocational Certificate Level 2
Level 6	TEAGASC	Vocational Certificate Level 2
	Fáilte Ireland (CERT/NTCB)	Advanced Skills/Supervisory Development Certificate
	Fáilte Ireland (CERT/NTCB)	National Certificate in Professional Cookery
	FÁS	Specific Skills
	FÁS	National Skills Certificate
	FÁS/DES	National Craft Certificate*
	NCVA	National Vocational Certificate Level 3
TEAGASC	Vocational Certificate Level 3	
TEAGASC	Advanced Certificate in Agriculture	
TEAGASC	Certificate in Farm Management (trainee farmer)	

Regardless of where you are employed, the service must comply with all relevant legislation.



The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 established 3 new bodies, namely **National Qualification Authority of Ireland, FETAC and HETAC.**

- The National Qualification Authority of Ireland (NQAI)** is responsible for developing the National Framework of Qualifications.
- The Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC)** is the awarding body for all further education and training in Ireland.
- The Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC)** makes awards for learning in a range of higher education and training institutions, including the Institutes of Technology.

There are also a number of other awarding bodies that make awards within the new framework:

- The Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) and the Universities,** which provide programmes and are awarding bodies in their own right.
- The State Examinations Commission** (Department of Education and Science) Awards the Junior and Leaving Certificate.

glossary

- Accreditation** Official recognition of a training course by a nationally registered accreditation body
- APL** Accredited Prior Learning
- BTEA** Back to Education Allowance
- BTEI** Back to Education Initiative
- CAO** Central Admissions Office
- Childcare** Services providing non-parental, day-care for young children and school-going children out of school hours. Services such as pre-schools, naíonraí, crèches, nurseries playgroups, childminding and school age groups are included, but schools and residential childcare centres are not.
- CACHE** Council for Awards in Children's Care & Education
- CTI** Central Technical Institute
- DIT** Dublin Institute of Technology
- DES** Dept. of Education and Science
- Elective** Optional or discretionary choices
- FETAC** Further Education & Training Awards Council
- HETAC** Higher Education & Training Awards Council
- FÁS** Foras Áiseanna Saothair (National Training Authority)
- MACTE** Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education
- Mature Student** To qualify as a mature student you must be at least 23 years old on Jan 1st of the year in which you wish to take up a course
- Module** Separate units of study, which can be completed and certified in isolation or as part of a fuller course
- NCEA** National Council of Education Awards
- NCFE** National Council of Further Education
- NCVA** National Council for Vocational Awards
- NQAI** National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
- NUI** National University of Ireland
- NVCC** National Voluntary Childcare Collaborative
- PLC** Post Leaving Certificate Courses
- SEC** State Examinations Commission (Department of Education and Science)
- UL** University of Limerick
- VEC** Vocational Education Committee
- VTOS** Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:



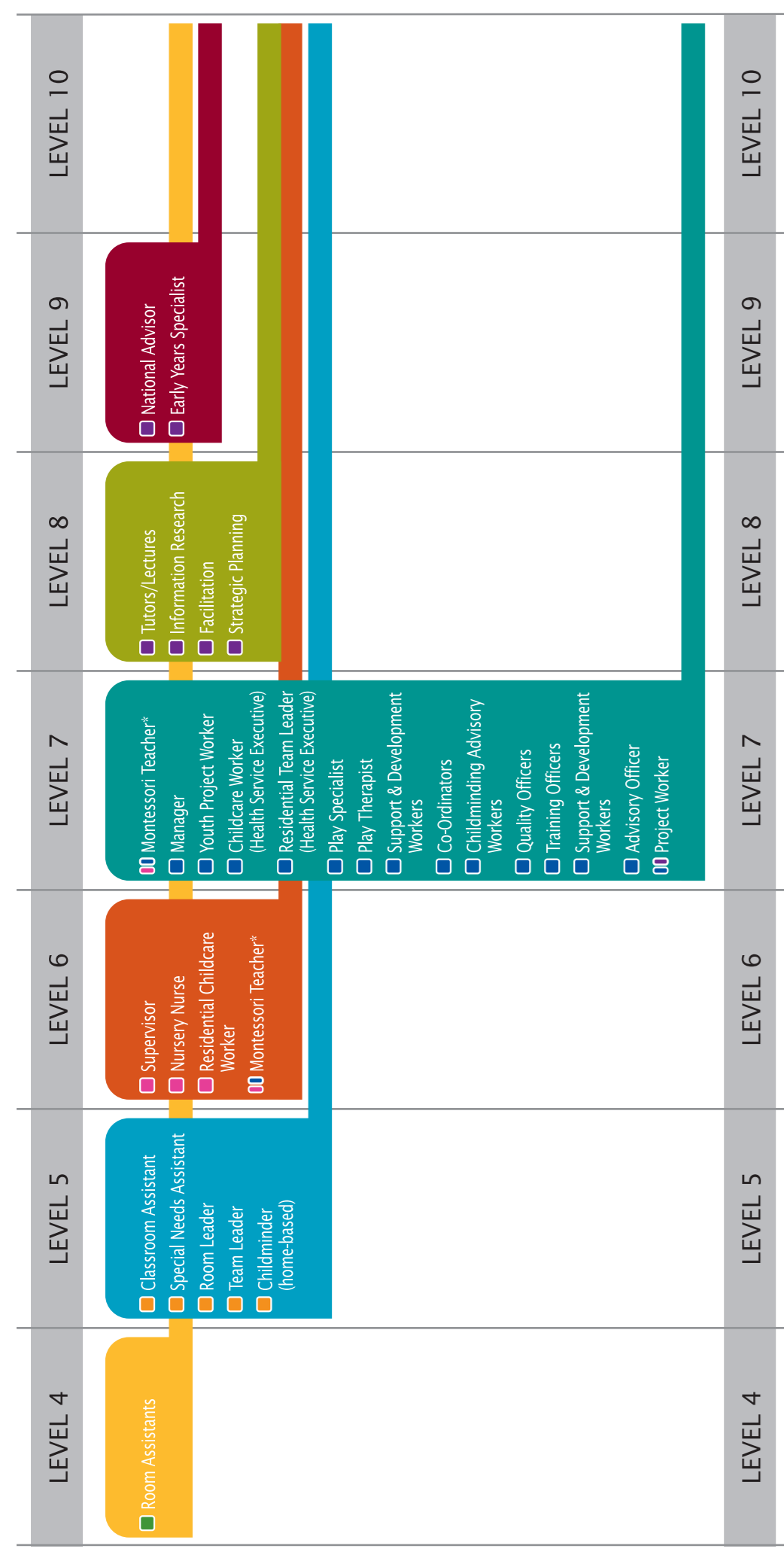
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Guide to Childcare Training Paths – Suggested Qualifications



Basic Practitioner ■ Intermediate Practitioner ■ Experienced Practitioner ■ Advanced Practitioner ■ Expert Practitioner ■ *In the case of Montessori Teacher, Level 7 or higher may be required in certain areas

Regardless of where you are employed, the service must comply with all relevant legislation.

*Occupational Profile as described in 'Quality Childcare & Lifelong Learning – Model Framework for Education, Training and Professional Development in the Early Childhood Care and Education Sector'

Before undertaking any childcare training, make sure the college, school, organisation or institute you are hoping to study with offers a recognised qualification which is accredited by one of the following:

Republic of Ireland	Northern Ireland
Universities	Universities
Higher Education Training Awards Council (HETAC)	
Further Education Training Awards Council (FETAC)	CACHE, NIQC
DIT	



Childcare Courses: frequently asked questions



Why train in childcare?

As the childcare sector in Ireland is becoming more regulated formal training is becoming more of a requirement than before. Having a formal qualification can give you the skills and confidence to work in a variety of childcare settings and can give you wider options in pursuing a career in childcare. If you are currently working in childcare, you have probably gained very valuable experience and knowledge through working directly with children. Further training or education, in addition to keeping you abreast of new developments in childcare, can also complement this experience.

Do I need previous qualifications?

Childcare training courses are suitable for both school leavers and mature students. Most full-time courses require that people under 23 years old must be of Leaving Certificate standard or equivalent. Mature students may be exempted from the need to have formal qualifications, but will normally be requested to attend for interview.

Could I make a career in childcare?

There are more opportunities now than ever before to pursue an interesting and challenging career in childcare. Employment potential in the childcare sector is on the increase as more people are availing of childcare services for their children. The kind of work you might be doing depends on the level of experience and qualification you gain and this in turn dictates the salary you would get paid. The work can vary from caring for babies and young children, to helping them to learn, to dealing with parents, to supervising or training staff, to managing a childcare project (see table on career paths).

I already have a qualification in childcare – is there more training or education I could do?

Yes, there are a number of options open to you depending on the level of qualification you already have and the way in which you want to proceed with your career. For example, if you have a basic qualification you may wish to upgrade your skills and improve your career prospects by doing a more advanced course. If you are interested in progressing to third level, it is worth noting that having a FETAC Level 5 (formerly Level 2) Certificate means you can apply for a place in a number of higher education institutions.

What course would suit me best?

Choosing a course can be a difficult task when you are confronted with a wide range of programmes to choose from. It is worth spending time finding out as much as possible about potential courses before deciding, which is the best for you (see tips on choosing a course).

How do I apply? What are the entry requirements?

In most cases you will be required to complete an application form, which is generally available directly from the training body.

What about accreditation? What qualification will I have at the end of the course?

Before undertaking a course it is important that you find out if the qualification you receive at the end is accredited. Having a recognised qualification means that there are more options available to you in terms of employment and/or progressing to further training or education. Some one-off courses are not accredited but are useful in terms of improving your skills and knowledge for working in childcare (see section on National Qualifications Framework).

What will the training cost?

The cost of training courses varies according to the type of childcare training and the location in which it is being offered. For example, people on VTOS and BTEA schemes are not charged any fees, BTEI course are generally free or fees are reduced, PLC courses are free other than paying a small registration and exam fee, community-based courses charge a small training fee and adult education courses charge varying tuition rates. Third level institutions charge tuition fees, but for example, the Department of Education and Science, pays the fees for undergraduate students in Institutes of Technology and some third level students may be eligible for grants to attend college. Mature students attending full-time college courses are entitled to the same financial assistance as school leaving students.

How flexible is the training?

Some courses are more flexible than others, in terms of when they are run and how they are run. For example, some training or educational bodies offer flexible courses than are run on a part-time basis, during the day, at night or on Saturdays to facilitate people with children or those in full-time employment. Some courses are run on a modular basis, which means that you can study one module at a time and focus on passing it, before progressing to the next one.

How long will it take to qualify?

This depends on the course you choose to undertake.

How many hours will I have to spend in class? Will I have to do a placement while I'm studying?

Again, the answer to both these questions depends on the course you choose. Some courses are part-time, with one day per week in class and others are full-time, with at least three days per week in class. Most courses require students to do a supervised placement in a childcare setting for a number of hours or days per week as part of the learning programme. It is important to gain practical experience of childcare in order to put into practice the theory you are studying.



GUIDE TO Childcare Training Paths

