

Investing in children's futures:

The new childhood practice awards

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The launch of the new Standard for Childhood Practice



The first degree level qualifications for early years and child care professionals based on a new professional standard are expected to be available throughout Scotland by the autumn. The new qualifications are the result of the Standard for Childhood Practice which was launched last year by Minister for Children and Early Years, Adam Ingram.

The Standard sets the benchmark at SCQF Level 9 for the new qualifications, known as childhood practice awards, to be developed. One aim of the standard is to allow early years and child care workers to follow courses with an appropriate balance of learning related to professional knowledge and understanding, skills and abilities, and values and personal commitment. It also establishes a professional framework for early years and childcare workers. This is an important step in professional recognition.

The development of childhood practice awards is designed to put Scotland at the forefront of the development of integrated qualifications for early years and child care practitioners. Longer term, all early years and child care managers will be required to gain the new awards that have 360 credits and lead to an award at level 9 with the SSSC.

At the time of the launch of the Standard for Childhood Practice, Minister for Children and Early

Years Adam Ingram said:

"I believe the support we give to children in the early years can make an important contribution to the kind of country we want Scotland to be: one which is smarter, wealthier and fairer, healthier, safer and stronger and greener.

"We will not be able to deliver the types of services we want for our youngest children if we do not invest in the skills and career opportunities of the people delivering those services.

"The Standard for Childhood Practice will help us deliver the services we want for our children and their families. Managers qualified to meet this new Standard at SCQF level 9 will be better equipped to deliver the quality of those services."

Evidence shows that the best experiences for children come from the best qualified staff, including where the manager has a degree level award.

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The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) worked closely with key stakeholders to determine the standard. For example 78% of professionals who responded to Scottish Government consultation felt that Level 9 or higher, on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework was the correct level for managers in day care of children services.

Carole Wilkinson, Chief Executive of the SSSC commented:



"Employers and course providers will continue to play an important role in the process to ensure the new awards of 360 credits that lead to an award at level 9 provide opportunities for managers, practitioners and workers."

"Importantly this standard aims to help strengthen leadership in the sector and improve career opportunities and pathways for early years and child care professionals including those new to and, already working within, the sector."

Events Diary

The SSSC will be hosting two events in June for employers to find out more about the standard and new qualifications. These will be held on:

- Tuesday 10 June 2008 in New Lanark
- Thursday 12 June 2008 in Perth.

Numbers will be limited to one per organisation. If you are an employer or you support employers and would like to book a place at either of these events contact on 01382 207173 or email joyce.hanna@sssc.uk.com indicating your choice of venue.

Training Providers delivering the new award

Training providers confirmed as launching their own Childhood Practice award are listed below along with their contact details. Other training providers are expected to launch similar awards in the future and we recommend you contact your local Childcare Partnership or Learning Network (www.learningnetworks.org.uk) to keep up to date with developments in your area.

Childhood Practice Award Training providers

University of Strathclyde in partnership with UHI Millennium Institute (UHI)

Telephone for University of Strathclyde: 0141 552 4400

Web for University of Strathclyde: www.strath.ac.uk

email: deirdre.grogan@strath.ac.uk

Telephone for UHI: 01463 279000

Web UHI: www.uhi.ac.uk

University of Edinburgh

Telephone: 0131 651 6481

Web: www.edinburgh.ac.uk

email: john.davis@education.ed.ac.uk

University of Dundee

Tel: 01382 381451

Web: www.dundee.ac.uk

email: b.h.dunn@dundee.ac.uk

University of Glasgow

Telephone: 0141 330 8156

Web: www.gla.ac.uk

email: K.Kelman@educ.gla.ac.uk



Facilitating work based learning

How employers can help

Employers will have an important role in supporting managers who choose to do the new awards in Childhood Practice. The awards are based on learners gaining 360 Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) credits at levels 7, 8 and 9 and there will be provision for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). However learners will need to complete other work based tasks to add to the credit they already have.

An important point is that 'learning time' is not just the amount of time gaining experience in the workplace nor is it the amount of time spent in study. It is an appropriate balance of the two and also takes account of other necessary activities such as reading, research and the preparation of work to be submitted for assessment.

The qualification is designed to develop and enhance the knowledge, skills and values of workers in the sector and is centrally concerned with practice. This means workers on programmes will be required to use their day to day work activities as a basis for their learning. This will need the agreement of and support from their employers.

The SSSC will be providing additional advice on how employers can provide this support. This advice will be discussed at the events being held in June. For further information on the events see page two.

Recognition of Prior learning:

One important feature of the new awards in childhood practice is that candidates who wish to do the award should be given recognition for the prior learning they have achieved. There are two kinds of prior learning that can count towards the childhood practice programme.

- Learning that has been assessed and credit rated and has achieved relevant qualifications such as HNQs, PDAs, and SVQs. Credit for these qualifications will normally be automatic and can be used for entry to a programme or for exemption within a programme.

- Learning that has been gained from experience either from work or from life in general. It is often unintentional and the learner may in fact not have recognised at the time of the experience that it contributed to the development of their skills and knowledge. Credit for this kind of learning can be claimed and assessed on an individual basis. The credit can then be used for entry to a programme or for exemption within a programme.

It is important to remember that RPL is about what a person has learned and not just about the experience they have. Each course provider will have processes in place for dealing with the recognised prior learning that candidates bring. Providers will be required to show these before they are approved to run the awards. The SSSC hopes to have advice available to the sector on this important aspect of the Childhood Practice awards by June 2008.

Higher National Diploma in Childhood Practice

The level 9 awards in childhood practice will require learners to have accumulated 360 credits at levels 7, 8 and 9. SQA are currently developing an HND in Childhood Practice and at the end of this learners will have achieved 240 credits. This might be a route that practitioners will want to use to help them move incrementally from the HNC in Early Education and Childhood Practice standard. The level 9 year could then be undertaken with one of the Higher Education Institutions offering the BA Childhood Practice. SQA are hopeful this award will be available in centres, many of which will be Scotland's colleges from September 2009.

For more information contact:
Eleanor.ramsay@sqa.org.uk





Questions and answers

Investing in Children's Futures and the implementation of the new childhood practice awards

Q1. Why was the new standard/award produced?

Early years and child care workers play a key role in providing the care and early education our children need to help them get the best possible start in life. The Scottish Government recognised the need to strengthen leadership in the sector and create a single, integrated qualification and professional development framework.

The Standard and Guidelines for Childhood Practice were published as a result of this, in November 2007 and led to the development of degree level awards for the early years sector. This will enhance good quality early years services and contribute towards positive outcomes for children and families as well as the professional development of the sector.

Q2. What do the new awards mean for early years managers and leaders who already have SVQ level 4 or management awards? Will they be expected or required to have to gain the new award in order to maintain a management position? If so how will this be funded? And will there be a timescale?

From 2011 the SSSC will require managers in day care of children services to have a childhood practice award. You can start working towards this qualification from autumn 2008. You should be able to use credit from your existing awards to help you get access to the new award and possibly credit for part of the award. This is called recognising prior learning and the SSSC will be producing some additional guidance on this aspect of the award. For information on what training and funding may be available in your area, contact your local authority Childcare Partnership. Further advice on the process of registration with the SSSC for this group of workers, will be publicised in due course.

Q3. I'm halfway through a leadership/early years management qualification – does the launch of the new award devalue this qualification?

No. You should be able to get credit for what you have already done and you may have very little additional work to complete the new award. It is very dependant on how the award you

are currently doing maps against the benchmark standard. A provider (for example a local university or college) will be able to give you guidance about the particular award you are doing.

Q4. I live in a rural area which doesn't have any learning establishments nearby. I'm interested in doing the new award. Will this be possible?

Courses will be part time and full time and delivered flexibly including via on-line learning, through attendance at colleges and universities and through work based learning. If you are interested in finding out more about the award/course, register your interest with your nearest training provider now (details listed on page three).

Q5. What will the award involve if I undertake it (ie placement in a workplace, how many hours of study, a dissertation)?

Each course provider will have different course arrangements and you should contact them to ask for details of the volume of study required. You may be asked to go to another establishment to work shadow or to sample how a bigger or smaller organisation works. You may also be encouraged to contribute to on line discussions to debate practice but this will depend on what your course provider requires. Your workplace experience will be gained in and through the workplace and this could be your own.

Most people who are doing this award won't need any "placement" experience as this will have been done when they were doing their initial training.

Q6. I work in a play group/I'm a play worker. Will I be expected to gain the new degree level award for 2011 as well?

If you are providing a "day care of children service" other than an out of school care service you will be required to do this from 2011. However you will have three years from your post 2011 re registration dates in which to achieve the new award. If you don't re register until 2011 you would have until 2014 to complete it.

To find out more please contact us
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11 Riverside Drive
Dundee DD1 4NY
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