

# Children's workforce

## GUIDE TO QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING

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Leaders

With many parts of the sector facing recruitment challenges, *Joe Lepper* identifies developments in entry-level requirements and ongoing professional development for children's services practitioners



**T**he cost-of-living crisis continues to have a significant impact on children's and youth services in 2023. Many face increasing demand, especially when it comes to young people's mental health, but are also under financial pressure.

Concerns about pay and conditions have seen key workers including teachers, nurses and doctors go on strike. Recruitment and retention are a key concern in areas including social services, healthcare and early years.

Despite the challenges the sector continues to explore ways to improve training and career pathways.

Key developments this year include the publication of the government's response to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care in England, which proposes new social work roles and the creation of "family help" teams.

There has also been significant investment in early intervention services including the roll-out of family hubs.

The use of virtual and online training continues to grow in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) says virtual learning can be a "cost-effective option for participants".

"Looking to the future, having on-demand training in a virtual learning platform environment is likely to become a popular option," says BASW.

Social care regulator Social Work England's *State of the Nation* report this year says "a case can be made for a hybrid approach" to learning, combining in-person and online training. Benefits include better work/life balance and making learning more inclusive.

Improving inclusivity is a key concern for many children's services organisations given a lack of diversity in parts of the sector, especially in senior and management roles.

## SOCIAL WORK



Department for Education data shows there were 7,900 social work vacancies in England in 2022, up by more than a fifth compared with the previous year and the highest rate since 2017. In 2022, children's services lost 5,400 full-time equivalent social workers.

"Unmanageable caseloads, not enough staff support and a lack of resources," are factors in this exodus, says the British Association of Social Workers (BASW).

According to the DfE, caseloads increased from 16.3 per social worker in 2021 to 16.6 in 2022. And the sickness absence rate rose from 3.1 to 3.5 per cent.

In March 2023, the charity Food Foundation warned social care workers were among those hardest hit by the cost-of-living crisis, with 27.9 per cent of those working in the sector experiencing food insecurity.

As councils battle to hire permanent employees many are forced to rely on agency staff, with 6,800 full-time equivalent temporary workers used in 2022, up 13 per cent on 2021's figures.

### Emerging policy

The government pledged action aimed at tackling workforce shortages in England in its February 2023 response to last year's Independent Review of Children's Social Care.

Plans set out in the *Stable Homes, Built on Love* document are backed by £200m investment over the next two years. However, this falls short of the independent review's call for £2.6bn in funding over five years with £1bn spent over the first two years.

Measures pledged by government include recruiting child protection lead practitioners to work within family help teams to better

protect children, keep families together where possible and tackle issues including domestic abuse.

Multi-agency child protection units are also planned, where child protection lead practitioners work with education and justice specialists on safeguarding plans.

High turnover of social workers, increasing demand and delays in assessments are also affecting services in Northern Ireland, according to a review of children's social care published in June this year. This recommended the creation of a single, region-wide body to deliver social care and the development of a trainee social worker programme.

### Early career development

Early career development for social workers is also set to be shaken up by measures outlined in the government's *Stable Home, Built on Love* report. Ministers want to create a five-year early career framework (ECF) for children's social workers similar to the framework available to teachers. This would replace the current assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE).

Through the ECF the government hopes to introduce "an expert practitioner level" for years three to five post qualifying, to help social workers to move to child protection lead practitioner roles.

Plans to recruit up to 500 additional child and family Level 6 social worker apprentices are also included. The government says apprentices "are more likely to be from the communities they work in and so will be more likely to reflect their diversity". Councils will be encouraged to support staff to become apprentices.

### CAREERS IN CAFCASS

The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) is England's largest employer of social workers. Its family court advisers (FCAs) work across private and public law, looking after the interests of children involved in court proceedings.

They must be qualified social workers and experienced in working with highly vulnerable children and families. FCAs can become practice supervisors, taking on additional responsibility for supervising the casework of others, while supporting the service manager and handling more complex cases.

Cafcass runs a Social Work Academy for newly qualified social workers, offering mentoring and training with social workers

working towards a master's degree over three years. The academy was created to train and develop social workers to Cafcass's standards.

In April, Cafcass updated its practice quality standards for working with children and families in public law proceedings based on latest reviews and significant incident reports. These include standards around reducing delays and engaging with children.

In the same month the service also introduced standards for those working in private family court cases, covering issues such as understanding children's rights, welfare and safety. Other areas covered by these standards include tackling bias and prejudice and ensuring plain, jargon-free language is used with children and families.



In addition, the DfE and Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) are working on plans to improve training bursaries and support grants.

### Agency workers

The government is also keen to tackle councils' reliance on agency staff. A 2023 consultation set out plans such as pay caps and a three-month ban on social workers leaving a council role to do more lucrative agency work in the same area.

A minimum requirement of five years' post-qualifying experience before being able to work for an agency is also being considered.

The Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) wants the local cooling-off period for council workers leaving to join agencies extended to at least six months.

But a survey by the Recruitment and Employment Confederation found two in five social workers would quit the profession if restrictions were put in place on agency work, which many see as more flexible and better paid.

### Training standards

In March, social work regulator Social Work England (SWE) launched its new three-year strategy, which promises to build on plans to simplify training frameworks plus guidance for providers on improving equality, diversity and inclusion.

Training standards include requiring social work students to spend 200 days learning in practice settings.

Social worker teaching, supervision and assessment is carried out by practice educators. SWE is looking to "develop a closer relationship" with these trainers including assuring their work. It has commissioned



## Meet the practitioner

**Richard Devine, children and family social worker, Bath and North East Somerset Council**

Richard Devine's choice of career was informed by his late father's experiences as a child in care. His dad suffered abuse in a children's home and went on to become a social worker.

"I felt an obligation to finish off what he had started," explains Devine, who was 16 when his father died. "I wanted to work with children in a way that made a positive difference and thought social work was an opportunity to do that."

After completing his BSc in Social Work from the University of the West of England in Bristol he went on to do further training, including a master's degree in attachment

studies from the University of Roehampton and local authority-run training on issues such as domestic abuse and substance misuse.

He has also completed Signs of Safety and Systemic Practice training and is now a trainer of social workers himself, delivering the British Association of Social Workers' child protection social work practice masterclass series this year.

He advises those considering a career in social work to seek out relevant work experience.

"Look for opportunities to work with children and families, ideally with social workers but also in community settings," he says. He also advises listening to social work podcasts for further insight into profession.

academic research into their role, with a final report due in September 2023.

Student social workers are registered in all parts of the UK, except England. SWE says any move to proceed with student registration in England "would require full public consultation and legislative change".

During their registration year social workers must record a minimum of two different pieces of continuing professional development (CPD), including one on peer reflection.

A formal consultation took place last year ahead of new guidance on readiness for professional practice, setting out the skills student social workers need to register with SWE. Guidance is expected by January 2024.

In May 2023, SWE set up a training advisory forum to bring together employers, course providers and social workers to support the body in implementing guidance.

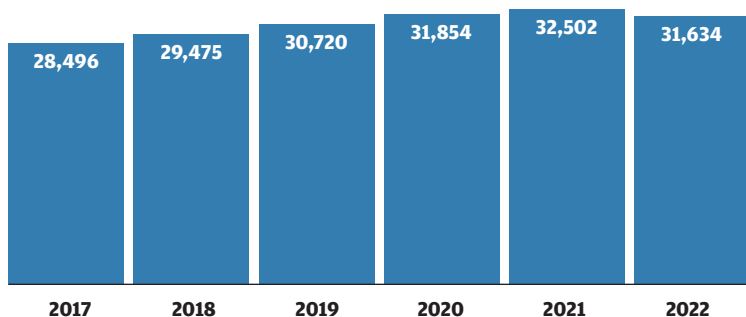
### Routes into social work

A three-year social work degree or a two-year master's are the main routes into children's social work. University courses include two placements. There are 83 providers delivering 297 courses.

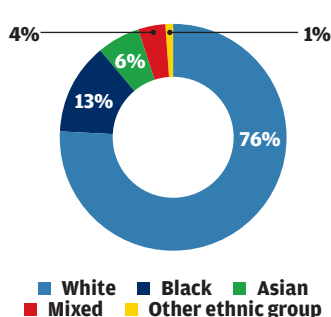
Bursaries are available for 2,500 undergraduates and offer £4,862.50 (£5,262.50 in London) for the final two years of study. The postgraduate rate for 1,500 students is £3,362.50 (£3,762.50 in London).

## CHILDREN AND FAMILY SOCIAL WORK WORKFORCE IN ENGLAND

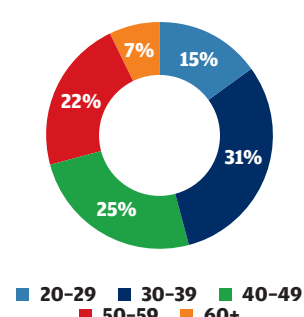
Number of full-time equivalent children and family social workers in post



Ethnicity of children and family social workers



Age of children and family social workers



Source: Reporting year 2022 Children's social work workforce, Department for Education, February 2023

## Social work continued

Three-year university and employer-run integrated degree apprenticeships and fast-track routes are also available.

Fast-track providers include employer-based 14-month programme Step Up to Social Work for graduates, who receive a £19,833 bursary. Applications for the next Step Up to Social Work cohort in 2024 closed in April this year.

### Child Protection

In May the DfE awarded fast-track provider Frontline a contract to train 500 specialist child protection social workers a year for three years from September 2024. Participants qualify as a social worker after their first year on the three-year programme. They can also complete a fully-funded Msc in advanced relationship-based social work practice with children and families in their final year.

Frontline's programme starts with a four-week readiness to practice stage, the majority of which is delivered online, with three days of residential teaching and regional events. The first year includes a 200-day placement at a council or children's trust with the second year focused on continuous professional development and mentoring. Frontline covers tuition fees and participants receive a tax-exempt bursary of £18,000, or £20,000 in London. According to the training body 99 per cent of those who qualify on the programme go on to work in social work.

The Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse (CSA Centre), offers 27 training courses around child sexual abuse issues. Tailored

training for designated safeguarding leads, social workers and those in education and police forces is also available covering topics such as sibling sexual abuse. New CSA Centre courses for 2023 focus on multi-agency working and child sexual exploitation among other issues.

### Post-qualifying training

The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) offers a range of opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD). Programmes on offer in 2023 include the online Child Protection Social Work Masterclass series, covering issues such as ethical challenges and substance misuse. BASW plans to launch online learning material to support social workers who qualified overseas and come to work in the UK, training for out of hours social workers, and sessions on neurodiversity and relational social work.

Frontline's Pathways CPD programme focuses on building social workers' leadership skills. The course is funded by the DfE and run in partnership with North Yorkshire County Council and Foundations, the What Works Centre for Children & Families. It offers training for supervisors, middle managers, heads of service and practice leaders. As of June 2023, more than 900 social workers have started the programme since it launched in 2022.

### Residential care

The government's *Stable Homes, Built on Love* report says it will work with councils to create

regional care co-operatives to plan, commission and deliver care in two areas with a view to an England-wide roll out.

This report also outlines plans to develop professional registration of the children's residential care workforce and explore the development of a leadership programme for new managers. This would run alongside a new knowledge and skills statement and training for all managers.

The government is also committed to undertaking a workforce census and highlighting case studies of good practice in recruitment, retention, qualifications, and training.

The 2023 State of the Sector survey by the Children's Homes Association (CHA) found nearly three quarters of providers say they are facing significant recruitment and retention challenges.

The CHA has concerns over the effectiveness of the government's proposals. Its deputy chief executive Mark Kerr describes plans for regional care co-operatives as "pie in the sky", especially moves to pool budgets among councils that are already tackling deficits.

Meanwhile, he claims the workforce census is "not fit for purpose" because only a random sample of staff were asked for information.

CHA head of policy strategy Jen Robins worries that plans for professional registration of the workforce will be implemented in England ahead of the results of analysis into the effectiveness of the move. Registration will require a change in the law that could be introduced in 2024's parliamentary session.

Training for residential workers in supporting children with complex needs include a Level 3 course in therapeutic work with children and young people run by residential school Mulberry Bush. This has an option to continue to a Level 5 foundation degree, validated by the University of the West of England. Meanwhile, the Crossfield Institute, offers a Level 3 certificate in therapeutic group work with children and young people.

### Supported accommodation

Provision for looked-after children and care leavers aged 16-17 in supported accommodation must now be registered with Ofsted and is subject to basic requirements around staff training, supervision and development. This includes a commitment by providers to arrange essential training where there are gaps in knowledge and skills among staff. Providers must apply to register with Ofsted by 28 October 2023, with inspections due to start in April 2024.

## TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR FOSTER CARERS

There is no shortage of people saying they would like to foster, but the latest statistics from Ofsted suggest councils and independent fostering agencies (IFAs) are struggling to turn interested callers into carers.

In 2021/22, there were 138,075 enquiries in England, up 18 per cent on figures for 2017/18. But over the same period there was a five per cent fall in the number of places available. As of March 2022, there were 43,905 fostering households.

The Fostering Network says thousands of new foster families are needed to meet demand as around 30,000 children come into care every 12 months.

The government's *Stable Homes, Built on Love* strategy proposes action to improve recruitment and retention of foster carers, backed with around £25m investment over the next two years to ensure better support and allowances.

The Fostering Network offers training for prospective carers, shaped by standards outlined by the UK, Welsh and Scottish governments. The standards specify the need for carers to complete training after their applications are approved and be given a clear professional development plan to develop their skills.

The network offers the Skills to Foster training resource to help prepare prospective carers and new applicants.

A new edition of this will be available from the summer of 2023, with a greater focus on equality, diversity and inclusion and expanded content on child development, trauma and therapy.

The training package includes video tutorials and a series of masterclasses with the network's learning and development team as well as a "train the trainer" course for those who train and support foster carers.

# Post-Qualifying Certificate in Working Therapeutically with Adoptive Families



<b>When:</b>	Starts January 2024
<b>Duration:</b>	12 days, plus 1 assessment; Wednesdays, approximately two a month and one weekend
<b>Dates:</b>	January 10, 24; February 7, 28; March 13, 27; May 1, 15; June 5, 19; July 6/7 (Sat/Sun); 10am to 5pm each day; Assessment: 17 July 2024.
<b>Where:</b>	In person, at IATE Islington London
<b>Fees:</b>	£960 enrolment then £2,420 balance before start of the course

## Course Aim:

This training course will equip qualified therapists with key knowledge and skills in undertaking therapeutic work with adoptive families, and help you become eligible to provide adoption support therapy funded by Adoption Support Fund monies. Adoption is often associated with mostly positives: how can it be anything other than good when a child needs a family and is welcomed into a permanent home? However, due to the child's experiences prior to their adoption (attachment breaks and other developmental traumas), adoptive family life can be challenging. The parent

and child often struggle with the fall-out from the child's trauma and their critical life story questions, to which the parent brings their own history and triggers. A suitably trained therapist can be a significant support to adoptive families who are facing these trauma, life story and parenting challenges.

## Admissions:

You need to be a qualified and registered therapist (e.g. BACP, UKCP, ACP) who has a good knowledge of child development, attachment and trauma, and who has worked with children/adolescents for a minimum of 2 years. An interview (online) will follow your application. Closing date for written applications: 1 December 2023.

## Staffing:

The course is staffed by experienced adoption support therapists, counsellors, social workers and adoptive parents who have worked in the field for many years.



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**Start date:** February 2024  
**Time commitment:** 7 days over 4-5 months  
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## YOUTH WORK

In the past, youth work was mainly delivered by local authorities but today is provided by a range of organisations such as housing programmes, voluntary organisations, within the NHS and in social care or youth justice.

A 2021 analysis by the YMCA found funding for youth services in England had been cut by almost three quarters over the past decade.

The 2022 youth sector census by the National Youth Agency (NYA) suggests charities and community groups are now “disproportionately providing” open-access, universal services and out-of-school activities.

### Policy developments

Amid this shift in provision the government is reviewing councils’ statutory duty to provide youth services, with an update due later in 2023. The NYA has developed a toolkit setting out standards and steps councils should consider when developing provision, which will be published when the government’s update has launched.

In 2022, the government launched the National Youth Guarantee, to provide young people in England with access to activities, backed by a £300m Youth Investment Fund to build and refurbish new facilities by March 2025. After being heavily oversubscribed, applications closed in June 2023.

From this year, the National Citizen Service (NCS) shifted to a year-round offer that features community and online activities as well as residential stays. This coincides with funding cuts for NCS, from a peak of £180m annually to £171m over the next three years.

### Salary levels

Grades and pay for youth work jobs are negotiated each year by the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC), which includes staff and employer representatives. Youth and community support worker annual salaries are between £21,571 to £31,216 while a professional youth worker earns between £27,681 and £45,391.

### Qualifications

The JNC endorses youth work qualifications through the NYA. There are three common routes into youth work: apprentice, youth support worker, and professional youth worker.

Apprentices can gain a youth support worker Level 2 or 3 certificate in youth work practice while working in youth services.

Meanwhile, Level 2 and 3 qualifications or a diploma in youth work practice are available for youth support workers, who are typically volunteers or paid workers. The Level 2 is for

those aged 16 and older, while Level 3 is aimed at those aged 18 and older. Bursaries are set to be available in 2023/24, according to the NYA.

In autumn 2023, the NYA will launch an online Level 2 award in youth work practice through its online training platform, the NYA Youth Work Academy.

Professional youth workers can gain a three-year full-time or part-time equivalent BA Hons degree in youth work, a two-year full-time Level 6 graduate diploma, a one-year full-time Level 7 postgraduate diploma and a one-year full-time Level 7 master’s degree.

A Level 6 integrated degree youth work apprenticeship, developed by NYA, universities and the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, launches in September 2023. Five approved universities and training providers will offer the new apprenticeship. The NYA says two more providers are on track for a January 2024 start, with a further four universities expected to offer the course in 2024.

The NYA is working with NatWest to provide almost £3m of apprenticeship training for youth workers through the bank’s apprenticeship levy transfer scheme by 2028. This will fund up to 60 apprenticeships in 2023.

A voluntary youth worker register, for those qualified at Levels 6 and 7, is available via the NYA’s Youth Work One platform.

In July 2023, the NYA launched standards on safeguarding and youth work practice, outlining the minimum requirements of youth work.

### Recruitment

The NYA’s 2021/22 annual higher education monitoring survey shows an overall increase in the number of students on youth work courses, mainly due to a significant rise in those studying at postgraduate level. The survey shows there were 302 enrolments in professional youth work courses, up 32 on the previous year.

Undergraduates studying youth and community work tend to be considerably older than the national average for undergraduate courses. More than three quarters – 77 per cent – were aged 21 or older in 2020/21. Almost half – 47 per cent – of postgraduate students were aged 30 or older, up from 28 per cent the previous year.

Among students, 46 per cent are people of colour, while 20 per cent have a disability. Almost eight in 10 – 79 per cent – of students recruited are women.

### Social prescribing

Social prescribing, where community activities are prescribed to improve health and wellbeing, is gaining momentum in youth services. The Social Prescribing Youth Network, set up by the charity StreetGames, would like all primary care networks in England to employ at least one social prescribing link worker dedicated to working with children and young people. The network, which is free to join, offers a range of tools, resources, networking and training opportunities.



### Meet the practitioner

**Tee Adams, youth worker based at Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust**

The positive impact of youth workers when she was growing up prompted Tee Adams to take up a career in youth services.

She has worked in youth centres, schools and prisons and is now directly employed by the NHS in Manchester, where she supports young people with long-term health conditions, specifically those with blood disorders. Her role includes helping young people with the transition from paediatric to adult health services, focusing on their wellbeing and being an advocate.

Her qualifications include a BA Hons in

youth and community work with practical theology. She studied in Nottingham with the Institute for Children, Youth and Mission and completed a JNC qualification at the same time as her degree.

“I had fantastic lecturers who had plenty of hands-on experience as well as academic knowledge. I made friends for life. And ultimately it shaped me into the youth worker that I am today,” she says.

She advises those considering a career in youth work to “get good training and a mentor to learn the fundamentals of youth work”. She says “resilience and empathy” are important personal skills for a youth worker.

“In recent years I’ve been on a lot of training around mental health and low-level interventions. I would love the opportunity for further study, perhaps a master’s degree.”

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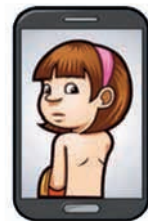
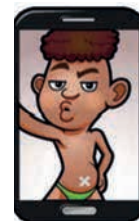
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## EARLY HELP



ANDREA OZIEROVA/ADOBE STOCK

Early support for children and families looks set for a boost with the creation of family hubs, intended to bring together a range of services for children up to the age of 19, or 25 for those with special educational needs and disabilities.

Family hubs will be rolled out across 75 areas, backed with £300m funding up to 2025, the government announced in February. Fourteen “trailblazer” authorities, in areas such as Blackpool, Cornwall, Manchester and Torbay, will lead the way and are to receive extra funding.

### Start for Life

The family hubs model is a key element of the government’s Start for Life programme, designed to improve support for children in their first 1,001 “critical days”.

In February, the government published a progress report on Start for Life, which included plans to test new workforce models. These will be piloted in five areas between April 2023 and March 2025 and backed by £10m in funding.

“These pilots will test ideas on how best to support the workforce to give babies the best start in life,” said the government. This includes looking at the mix of skills needed in local areas to support families with very young children.

The government has also pledged additional training to support the Start for Life workforce including interdisciplinary training designed to improve the way different professionals work together.

Online training modules for practitioners working with families with babies were due to be launched this summer.

Start for Life training this year also includes funding an additional 11 places on clinical psychologist and child and adolescent

psychotherapist courses, to improve mental health support for families.

From this year, early help staff working with families with babies are being offered Health Education England (HEE) training focused on evidence-based parent and infant relationship interventions.

HEE is also developing online training around demonstrating reassurance and empathy when supporting families, which was due to be launched this summer.

### Family help services

The government’s *Stable Homes, Built on Love* report, published in response to last year’s Independent Review of Children’s Social Care, also outlines plans to bolster the early help workforce. Support varies across England with early help services provided to about 15 per cent of children in some areas but less than one per cent in others.

The government’s plans centre on developing new “family help” services for those struggling with a range of challenges. Support would be delivered by multi-disciplinary teams, including social workers,

who will work with families “as soon as problems emerge”. The government has said it will consult on plans to enable a wider range of practitioners to be caseholders for children in need and their families.

Family help services will be tested in 12 pilot areas over the next two years, backed by £45m in funding. Services will be led by councils working alongside health visitors, schools, family hubs and adult mental health teams.

Family help workers will continue to be involved with supporting families when intervention escalates, for example due to child protection concerns. The government says the current system is disjointed, with families moving between early help services and child in need teams. “With each new change in professional, children and families’ histories are lost and the true scale of long-term harm becomes obscured,” says the *Stable Homes, Built on Love* report.

### Supporting Families

The government’s Supporting Families scheme was launched in April 2022 and focuses on families facing multiple problems, including unemployment, poor school attendance, health concerns, domestic abuse and risk of being involved in crime and anti-social behaviour. The government has committed £695m to the scheme – which replaced the Troubled Families programme – in the three years to 2025.

Programme roles include co-ordinators, key workers and employment advisers.

The scheme’s latest annual report says it achieved 50,000 successful outcomes in the nine months to January 2023 (see graphics) and nearly 535,000 since its predecessor was launched a decade ago.

The family help pilots will include looking at how Supporting Families funding is being used, with findings used to inform future government spending decisions.

## SUPPORTING FAMILIES PROGRAMME

### Number of successful outcomes achieved from April 2022 to January 2023

Total successful family outcomes	50,860
Breakdown of successful family outcomes	48,931
	1,929

- Achieved significant and sustained progress
- Achieved continuous employment

Source: *Supporting Families Programme Annual Report 2022-23*, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

## EDUCATION

Education support staff, such as teaching assistants, mental health workers and special educational needs co-ordinators (Sencos) have faced a number of challenges in 2023, including increased demand for support.

A Barnardo's report on mental health support in schools, published earlier this year, found most of its practitioners had seen an increase in wellbeing issues among children and young people in the past year. A survey in September 2022 found about three quarters of young people that took part would like to see more mental health support in schools.

Meanwhile, in February 2023 the Disabled Children's Partnership said gaps in provision across education, health and social care were contributing to ill health in seven out of 10 disabled children.

Pressures are also taking their toll on staff. The National Education Union's 2023 survey of education support staff found three quarters are working extra hours, mostly due to the demands of their workload. Half said there has been a reduction in their numbers over the past year.

### Sencos

All mainstream schools are required to have a Senco to support pupils with special education needs and disabilities (SEND). Sencos are qualified teachers who work with school leaders, advise colleagues and co-ordinate specific provision.

In March 2023 the government published its SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan, introducing a new leadership-level Senco National Professional Qualification (NPQ), which will effectively replace the current mandatory National Award for SEN Co-ordination qualification.

Training is offered by the National Association of Special Educational Needs (Nasen), including accredited courses such as a Level 3 and 4 SEND Casework Award and Youth Mental Health First Aid. For teachers and support staff it offers a Recognised Teacher or Practitioner of SEND course and provides training resources through its Whole School SEND Consortium.

### Teaching assistants

Teaching assistants (TAs) are involved in supporting SEND pupils. The government's SEND plan, promises a "longer term approach" to the role to "ensure their impact is consistent across the system". A research project will look at evidence of success in schools as well as issues such as demand for TA support.

TA training is on offer from Maximising TAs, including courses on helping to improve pupil independence and sessions for school leaders to improve the impact of TAs. It also offers a Level 3 team leader/supervisor apprenticeship course for TAs. This 12-month programme is aimed at TAs as well as learning support assistants and includes four modules spread across eight online seminars.

### Tutoring

The National Tutoring Programme was set up to help children catch up on lost learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic, with tutors and academic mentors providing extra support in schools.

The scheme is still running in schools but the Department for Education is gradually phasing out funding. In 2020/21 the DfE subsidised up to 75 per cent of the costs of providing tutoring but that dropped to 25 per cent in 2023/24. After 2023/24 schools will be expected to fund tutoring themselves, such as through their pupil premium budget for disadvantaged students.

Training for school staff through the programme is offered by the Education Development Trust and recognised by the Chartered College of Teachers. After completing their training, tutors and academic mentors can access a series of webinars providing guidance on delivering tutoring in schools.

In 2022, an Ofsted review of tutoring found sessions taught by qualified teachers were of a higher quality than those taught by other types of tutors, such as TAs.

### Senior mental health leads

Efforts to boost mental health support in schools include recruiting and training senior mental health leads to develop whole-school approaches to mental health and wellbeing.

These could be a school leader, such as a head teacher or deputy head teacher, or another member of staff.

The DfE's £1,200 training grant is intended to cover training costs for leads and hiring supply staff when they are learning. Courses are available at DfE-approved colleges and providers.

### Other roles

Through its SEND implementation plan the government plans to invest £21m to train two further cohorts of educational psychologists in 2024 and 2025 in partnership with NHS England. This will fund 400 more trainees. For 2023, £10m had been made available to train 200 trainees.

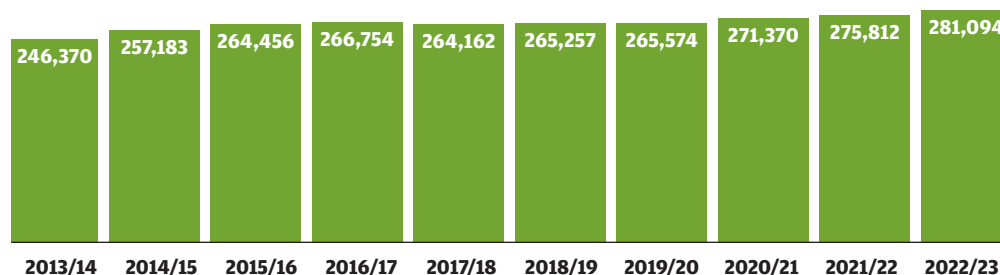
According to the Careers and Enterprise Company young people's "career readiness" improves when they receive careers education at school. The company offers training courses for careers leaders, including an online induction and face-to-face sessions. More specialist careers guidance offered by the company includes parental engagement training to involve families in careers provision.

A report released in June by the House of Commons education committee called for an updated careers strategy from government "with clear and measurable targets and actions". Committee chair Robin Walker MP called for careers education to be incorporated into training for teachers and Sencos due to its importance for young people.

Teachers can specialise in taking personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education in schools including relationship and sex education. The PSHE Association runs a number of virtual courses, with this year's sessions including courses in the autumn on puberty, drug and alcohol use and tackling sexual harassment.

## INCREASE IN TEACHING ASSISTANT WORKFORCE

### Number of full-time equivalent teaching assistants in England



Source: Reporting year 2022 School workforce in England, Department for Education, June 2023



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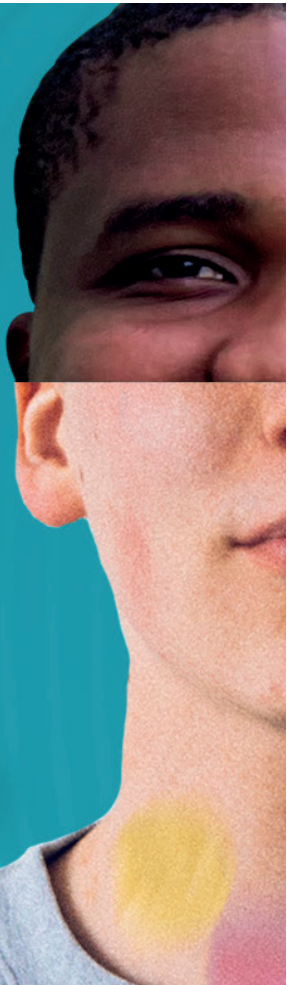
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## EARLY YEARS

The cost-of-living crisis is exacerbating early years staffing challenges.

Almost half – 48 per cent – of councils surveyed by the charity Coram this year said local providers had cut staff numbers due to rising costs. About seven in 10 councils said recruitment and retention of staff was a key factor affecting sustainability of childcare provision and around the same proportion – 71 per cent – of local authorities said settings were finding it “very difficult” to recruit staff with the right qualifications and experience.

The latest Ofsted figures show there were 4,800 fewer providers as of March 2023 than the previous year.

The government is looking to extend free childcare offers for working parents over the next two years. But councils are warning that nursery closures “will undermine capacity” ahead of this extension.

A survey of councils by the Local Government Association in July this year found that fewer than half believe their area has enough places to meet demand.

To meet the expansion of free hours, staff-to-child ratios for two-year-olds in England will be relaxed from 1:4 to 1:5 from September 2023, a move that is “appalling” for an already “overwhelmed and overburdened workforce”, according to Early Years Alliance (EYA) chief executive Neil Leitch. According to an EYA survey, eight in 10 of its members say they are already stressed.

### Childminders

Latest Ofsted figures show childminder numbers have dropped by 46 per cent over the last decade, from 55,600 in 2012/13 to 29,600 in 2021/22. In the 12 months to March 2023, their numbers dropped by 3,500.

Government action being taken to boost childminder numbers includes offering incentives to new recruits from this autumn of £600, or £1,200 for those that sign on with an agency. Children’s minister Claire Coutinho has said the government is looking at ways to reduce isolation and loneliness in the profession such as encouraging childminders to work together in non-domestic premises such as village halls.

### Levels 2 and 3

Staff with a Department for Education-approved Level 2 qualification are known as early years practitioners and apprenticeships at this level are available.

Level 3 qualified staff are known as early years educators. A new set of criteria for the role, including an improved focus on

safeguarding, will come into effect in September 2024.

The government is also considering removing a requirement for Level 3 early educators to hold a Maths GCSE or equivalent, as part of a wider consultation on the early years foundation stage, which sets standards for learning and development and care for children. Leitch says this requirement has been “a particular barrier” to recruitment.

A Level 3 Education and Childcare T-Level has also been available since 2020.

### Degrees and foundation degrees

Level 6 Early Childhood Studies degrees are available from universities. These can include Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner competencies, developed by the Early Childhood Studies Degree Network, to prove graduates can put their learning into practice, in areas such as children’s rights.

Level 5 early years foundation degrees supported by professional body, Sector Endorsed Foundation Degrees in Early Years, are also available. These can be topped up to a full degree.

A Level 5 Early Years Lead Practitioner Apprenticeship offers early years career progression through practice leadership. An 18-month National Professional Qualification for Early Years Leadership is available, aimed at managers or aspiring managers of nurseries, or childminders with leadership responsibilities.

### Post-qualifying training

Through the government’s Early Years Education Recovery Programme 18 “practice hubs” are being set up to share good practice,

## PLAY

Although play schemes in England are not required to employ staff with childcare or play qualifications, there are several courses and qualifications available in this sector.

City & Guilds offers a Level 2 award, certificate and diploma in playwork and in 2022 NCFE introduced a new suite of playwork qualifications including a NCFE Cache Level 2 diploma. A Level 3 certificate in understanding playwork, a diploma in playwork and award in transition to playwork are also available.

TQUK offers a Level 2 diploma for the playwork practitioner and learners can progress to either a playwork apprenticeship or a Level 3 diploma in playwork.

From September 2022 settings in Wales that offer out-of-school and holiday provision needed to ensure an “appropriate proportion of staff are suitably qualified”.

In Wales there is also a NCFE Cache Level 5 diploma in advanced playwork available for those looking to develop their skills, who are aged at least 19, with a minimum qualification at Level 3 and already working unsupervised in play settings.

A BA (Hons) in childhood development and playwork is available from Leeds Beckett University and the University of Gloucestershire’s Playwork Partnership courses are available through the university or local trained providers.

offer mentoring and evidence-based development for early years practitioners. They have been funded for two years until the end of 2024 and are supported by the Education Endowment Foundation and National Children’s Bureau.

Early Years Initial Teacher Training is also available as a postgraduate course, as well as for undergraduates and experienced practitioners, including those who gained their qualifications overseas.

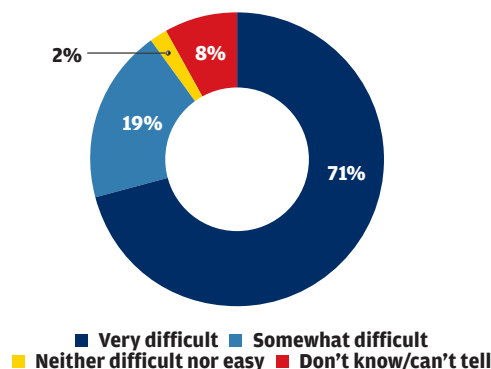
Sector bodies such as the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years, the National Day Nurseries Association and the EYA deliver online and face-to-face training.

### SEND

The government wants 5,000 more early years practitioners with a special educational needs co-ordinator (Senco) qualification. The Best Practice Network has been appointed to deliver fully funded, four-month Early Years Senco Level 3 courses. The qualification is being funded through the DfE’s education recovery package, to help children catch up on their learning and development following the Covid pandemic.

## RECRUITMENT DIFFICULTIES

Difficulty recruiting qualified early years staff – % of local authorities



Source: Childcare Survey 2023, Coram Family and Childcare



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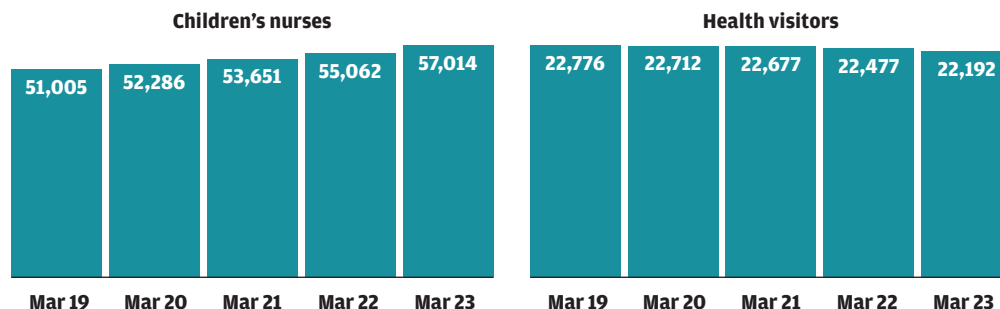


[www.earlyhelpconference.com](http://www.earlyhelpconference.com)

## HEALTH

### NURSES WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

#### Number of nurses on the UK-wide Nursing and Midwifery Council register



Source: The NMC register 1 April 2022–31 March 2023, Nursing and Midwifery Council

The cost-of-living crisis and a decade of cuts have taken their toll on a health workforce still coming to terms with the strain of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This has seen staff leave and workers strike over pay and conditions in 2023 with more than 100,000 vacancies across all NHS roles in England.

In June, the government pledged action in its long-term workforce plan for the NHS in England, including doubling doctor and nurse training places by 2031 and improving staff retention through flexible pensions and better career progression. A national framework to fund apprenticeship schemes is also promised.

However, the Royal College of Nursing is concerned about a lack of detail around financial support for student nurses and staff retention in the workforce plan.

#### Nurses and midwives

As of March 2023, there were 788,638 nurses, midwives and nursing associates registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC). In the year to March 2023, the number of midwives grew from 40,163 to 41,716 and children's nursing numbers rose from 55,062 to 57,014.

But 52 per cent of the 27,000 nurses and midwives who left in 2022/23 did so earlier than planned. Retirement, health concerns and burnout were the main reasons given.

The workforce plan aims to double nurse training places to 38,000 by 2031/32. However, the Universities and Colleges Admissions

Service (Ucas) received just 33,750 applications for undergraduate nursing courses by January 2022, compared with 41,220 at the same time in 2021.

Plans to double the school nurse training intake from 335 in 2022 to 662 by 2031 are also included in the NHS workforce plan. Their numbers fell 32 per cent between 2010 and 2022.

Meanwhile, in February the NMC's pre-registration education programme changed to be more flexible, allowing simulated training, such as the use of virtual reality technology, for up to 600 of the 2,300 practice learning hours needed.

The changes also allow greater flexibility in placements to better reflect the wide variety of settings where nurses work, including prisons and social care.

Entry requirements have also been relaxed, to improve access for refugees and those from travelling communities. Applicants no longer need 12 years of evidenced general education.

Last year, the NMC published standards for specialist community public health nurse

roles, including school nurses and health visitors, focusing on issues such as children's rights.

Health Education England has launched a blended learning degree in midwifery with training carried out remotely and near to students' homes.

#### Health Visitors

The NHS long-term workforce plan includes boosting health visitor training intake from 768 in 2022 to 1,339 by 2031.

An Institute of Health Visiting (IHV) survey of the profession found 85 per cent believe there are not enough health visitors and 73 per cent say there is a lack of student health visitor places. Meanwhile, 78 per cent are affected by stress and 62 per cent feel demotivated.

Specialist IHV training courses cover issues such as domestic abuse, nutrition and autism.

#### Mental health

NHS Digital figures published in November 2022 show 18 per cent of children aged seven to 16 had a probable mental health disorder, up from 12 per cent in 2017.

The government's workforce plan aims to increase training places for mental health nurses, boosting the intake from 5,714 in 2022 to 11,012 by 2031. A 26 per cent increase in clinical psychology and psychotherapy places by 2031 is also in the plan.

In February 2023, Health Education England announced a pilot to train thousands of professionals, including sports coaches, to spot signs of mental health problems among children.

Mental health support teams (MHSTs) have been created to train senior mental health leads within education settings. As of 2022/23, 28 per cent of schools and colleges were covered by an MHST. This is set to rise to 35 per cent by April 2024.

Government grants of £1,200 to schools and colleges to train senior mental health leads are available. The government has committed funding for training up to 2025.



#### Meet the practitioner

**Imogen Boness, health visitor, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board**

Imogen Boness' interest in health visiting began when she qualified as a mental health nurse and supported mothers experiencing mental health problems in Cardiff.

"This sparked an enduring interest in perinatal mental health, infant development, and the impact of adverse childhood experiences," she explains and prompted her to apply for specialist community public health nurse health visitor training.

She qualified as a health visitor last year and through the Institute of Health Visiting is training to be a specialist in perinatal and

infant mental health and carrying out emotional wellbeing visits. She is also undergoing Newborn Behavioural Observation training via the Brazelton Centre UK around newborn baby communication and supporting parent and infant relationships.

She wishes she had applied for the health visitor course sooner. "Experience has taught me that I had so many transferable skills as a mental health nurse," she says.

She says nurses and midwives wanting a career in health visiting should have confidence in their ability to support families.

"I am so glad I built the confidence and went for it. Since qualifying, I have really enjoyed getting to know the area I work in and the families on my caseload," she adds.





# YOUTH JUSTICE

Leaving rates among prison and probation staff have been rising each year since 2017, according to HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) figures.

In March, the Youth Justice Board (YJB), which is responsible for overseeing the youth justice system, launched a workforce development strategy up to 2025.

This includes pledges to improve career support and training to help staff tackle complex problems around poverty and trauma. In addition, the government wants to recruit 1,500 probation officers by March 2024 to address increasing numbers of vacancies.

## Secure estate

HMPPS's Youth Custody Service (YCS) offers roles in young offender institutions (YOIs), secure training centres and secure children's homes. Band 3 youth justice worker pay ranges from £30,702 to £36,140 for a 39-hour week. Trainees start on a 37-hour a week contract.

Where there are no local vacancies at a secure setting, trainees can work away for 23 months through HMPPS's Prison and Youth Justice Futures Training Scheme and gain financial help with costs, including accommodation.

The YCS is looking at developing apprenticeship training, meaning the foundation degree in youth justice will no longer be required training for YCS officers.

The Unlocked Graduates scheme places graduate trainee prison officers in YOIs for four years. These trainees work towards a master's degree and receive a salary of up to £34,000 depending on location. Applications for the next cohort open in September 2023.

Currently, there is only one secure training

centre, Oakhill. The UK's first secure school is due to be launched by Oasis Restore by early 2024.

## Community

Training for youth justice specialists in multi-agency youth offending teams (YOTs) includes in-service courses, a youth justice effective practice certificate and youth justice degree.

The Association of YOT Managers (AYM) runs Level 5 and Level 7 leadership courses with local government leadership body Solace Enterprises.

The YJB-funded Youth Justice Sector Improvement Partnership is administered by the AYM and offers training for managers on carrying out peer reviews of YOTs and team leader training. It also offers operational manager training, coaching, and mentoring for YOT managers and supervisors.

## Further courses

The Youth Justice Institute offers free courses in areas such as trauma and reoffending.

Accredited by the University of Suffolk, Unitas offers a two-year, part-time Level 5 Foundation Degree in Youth Justice as well as BA Hons degrees in Youth Justice and Crime Criminology and Criminal Justice.

A 25-month Level 5 youth justice practitioner apprenticeship is also available from four providers, Unitas, South Devon College, Intelligencia Training and Mybe Awards.

Universities also offer a Youth Justice BA Hons degree covering social policy, psychology, sociology, and criminology.

In 2023, HM Inspectorate of Probation launched a one-year inspection skills course approved by SFJ Awards. Seven inspectors and 14 assistant inspectors are currently enrolled.



# LEADERS

In April the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) published details of the characteristics of directors of children's services (DCSs) for the first time. This revealed a lack of diversity, with 81 per cent identifying as white British and just six per cent identifying as either black African, black Caribbean, white and black Caribbean or white and Asian.

This backs up findings from the Independent Review of Children's Social Care which found leadership is not "sufficiently stable, diverse or experienced". The ADCS has set up an equalities and diversity working group to look at what more can be done to ensure the organisation is inclusive and diverse.

## Leadership programmes

The Department for Education-supported Upon scheme offers leadership training to new and aspiring DCSs. The programme is delivered by the Staff College, Oxford Brookes University's Institute of Public Care (IPC), Skills for Care and public services firm GatenbySanderson. Its aspiring directors programme launches in September 2023 and runs until March 2024 for 40 potential leaders. Upon contacts new DCSs as soon as they are appointed for enrolment on its new directors programme.

The Staff College's Black and Asian Leadership Initiative offers courses for black and Asian leaders. This three-day programme, which includes sessions on tackling racism and understanding concepts of race, is available for up to 25 participants in 2023.

A Women in Leadership Programme is also available from The Staff College, with a two-day residential course taking place in October.

## Commissioning

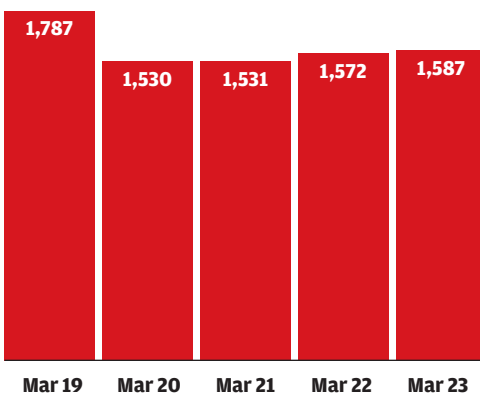
IPC has developed a commissioning course specifically for children's services. This involves eight half-day learning sessions online, supported by independent study. Optional accreditation based on a work-based commissioning project is available to gain a postgraduate certificate in commissioning and purchasing worth 20 master's-level transferrable credits. The course is fully booked as of July 2023 but those interested can be placed on a waiting list and notified of future dates, say IPC.

## Councillors

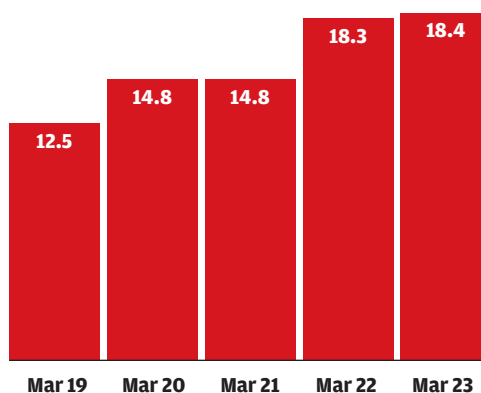
Lead council members for children's services and chairs of children's services scrutiny committees are offered training through the Local Government Association's Leadership Essentials series. This two-day training programme is running in autumn 2023.

## YOUTH CUSTODY SERVICE IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Numbers employed



Average number of days off sick each year per person



Source: HM Prison and Probation Service workforce quarterly, March 2023