

A GUIDE TO QUALIFICATIONS: FOR WORKING IN EARLY YEARS, CHILDCARE AND PLAYWORK





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1 ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

Do you want to build a career working with children? Are you interested in working in early years childcare, education or playwork? This booklet describes how you can find the right qualification to support your chosen career path and complements the booklet 'Work with Children' which describes some of the career opportunities now available.



This booklet begins by providing general

information about qualifications and then offers advice relevant to your particular circumstances. Whether you are thinking about what to do after leaving school, are already working with children or looking for a change of career, there is information here to help you find the right route to a qualification. Choose the section that you feel would help most and find out how you can build a satisfying career working with children.

There is a training route to suit every stage of your career, from leaving school to higher education level. You can now gain a recognised qualification in a way that suits you. Whether you want to work with children under five, school age children or you haven't yet decided, the booklet shows the key qualifications available.

The provision of childcare for children less than 8 years old is regulated by a government body called Ofsted. At least half those working in a registered childcare setting need to have a recognised qualification. So gaining a qualification is an important step in improving your employment and career opportunities.

There are two main ways to train for a qualification; you can study whilst you work or undertake a course of study. This could be at a local venue, a further education college or a sixth form college or other learning centre. Some employers will be happy to train you at work whilst some jobs will ask for a recognised qualification. Every local authority has an early years and childcare team and Children's Information Service, with someone able to advise you further on the types of jobs available locally in childcare, education or play work.

“A year or so ago I completed my NVQ Level 2 in Early Years, which involved one day a week at college. It's a fantastic qualification and it's really interesting, covering everything from babies and the basics of childcare to psychology and child protection”

“It's good to have what you're doing recognised by a national qualification. I'm working towards my NVQ Level 2 in Playwork and I'm really enjoying it. It'll be nice to say that I've got a certificate at the end of it. I love this job. A qualification is the icing on the cake”

“I'm just finishing my NVQ Level 3 qualification in Early Years Care, which will mean I'm a qualified Early Years Practitioner. It really makes you think about what you're doing and why – and it's something I'd never even thought about until I started my qualification. It means I can give a better quality of care”

2 TWO ROUTES TO A QUALIFICATION

There are two main ways to achieve a recognised qualification in early years, childcare education and playwork.

VRQs = Vocationally Related Qualifications

and

NVQs = National Vocational Qualifications

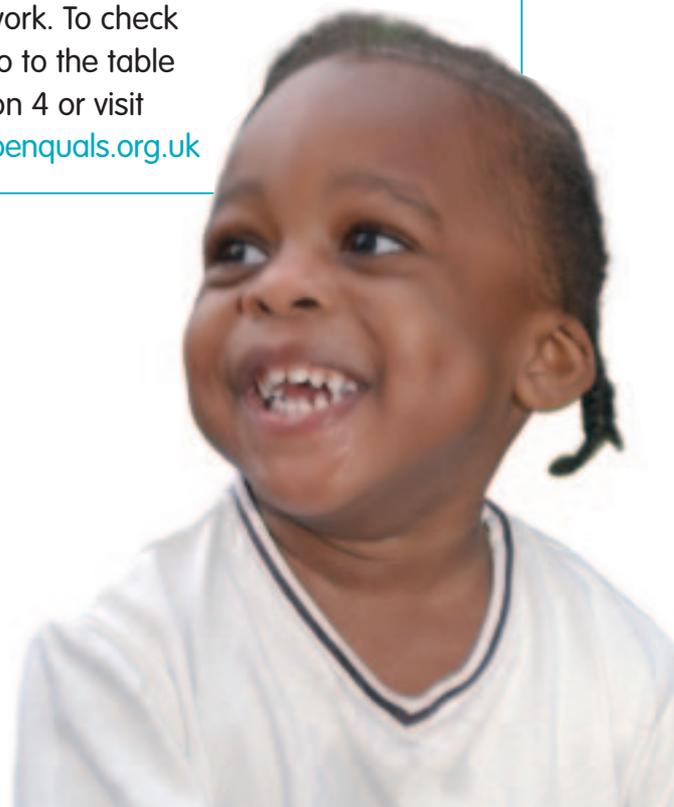
A VRQ can be gained at a further education college, sixth form college or other learning centre. There are a variety of courses leading to qualifications to suit your needs. You can study full or part time and gain some practical experience in a work setting. Courses are also available through distance learning though you will need to arrange how to get suitable workplace experience. Entry qualifications will depend on the course you take. Study support will be available to ensure your learning needs are met.

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are work-related, competence-based qualifications. They reflect the skills and knowledge needed to do a job effectively and show that a candidate is competent in the area of work the NVQ framework represents. They give those who are already experienced and skilled in their work a chance to achieve a recognised qualification.

You continue to work, studying part time and build a portfolio of your achievements. An NVQ assessor will assess your portfolio and observe your work. The whole process usually takes between 12 months and two years, but the pace is up to you. There are no formal entry qualifications as your work experience is the qualifying factor.

▶ **Quick tip!**

A 'recognised qualification' is one that has been approved by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) in England to be in the National Qualifications Framework. To check these go to the table in section 4 or visit www.openquals.org.uk



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WHAT QUALIFICATION LEVEL?

There are different levels of qualification suitable for every stage of your career

Foundation level For people with little or no experience of working with children. At college you will be given work placements to gain practical experience or as an apprentice you will train while you work.

Level two For those who are working under supervision such as Nursery Assistant or Playgroup Assistant working with children under five or an assistant playworker in an out of school setting.

Level three For those who work on their own initiative, planning and organising their own work and supervising others, for example, a nursery nurse, playgroup leader, senior playworker or a childminder working on their own at home.

Level four For experienced practitioners who carry out complex and non-routine tasks such as a manager of an early years nursery or out of school setting or a development officer for a local authority.

The grid on the following pages links key roles and qualification levels.



4 JOB ROLES AND QUALIFICATION GRID

Early years education and childcare

Job roles	Vocationally-related qualifications (awarding body)	Occupational qualifications
Crèche assistant Homestart worker Mother's help Nursery assistant Parent/toddler group assistant Playgroup assistant Pre-school assistant Toy library worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation Award in Caring for Children (CACHE) • Level 2 Certificate in Child Care and Education (CACHE) • Level 2 Certificate in Pre-school Practice (CACHE) • Level 2 Progression Award in Early Years Care and Education (C&G) • Intermediate Certificate in Developing Skills for Working with Children and Young People (NCFE) • Level 2 Certificate in Contributing to the Early Years Setting (C&G) • Intermediate Certificate in Developing Skills for Early Years Practice (NCFE) • Level 2 Certificate in Early Years Practice (CACHE) • Level 2 BTEC First Diploma in Early Years (EDEXCEL) 	NVQ level 2 in Early Years Care and Education (This NVQ is awarded by C&G, CACHE, EdExcel, EDI)
Childminder Crèche leader Nursery nurse Nursery supervisor Playgroup leader Pre-school leader Special educational needs supporter Toy library leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 3 Diploma in Child Care and Education (CACHE) • Level 3 Certificate in Childminding Practice (CACHE) • Level 3 Certificate of Professional Development in Work with Children and Young People (CACHE) • Level 3 Diploma in Pre-school Practice (CACHE) • Level 3 Diploma in Early Years Care & Education (Welsh Medium)(CACHE) • Level 3 Diploma in Playgroup Practice in Wales (CACHE) • Level 3 BTEC National Certificate in Early Years (EDEXCEL) • Level 3 BTEC National Diploma in Early Years (EDEXCEL) 	NVQ level 3 in Early Years Care and Education (This NVQ is awarded by C&G, CACHE, EdExcel, EDI)
Advanced practitioner Development officer Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 4 Certificate in Early Years Practice (OU) 	NVQ level 4 in Early Years Care and Education (This NVQ is awarded by C&G and CACHE)



Playwork

Job roles	Vocationally-related qualifications (awarding body)	Occupational qualifications
Assistant playworker Adventure playworker Holiday playscheme worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 2 Certificate in Playwork (CACHE) • Intermediate Certificate in Playwork (NCFE) • Intermediate Certificate in Developing Skills Working with Children and Young People (NCFE) • Intermediate Award in Playwork (NOCN) • Level 2 Progression Award • Level 2 Certificate in Supporting Playwork Practice (Technical Certificate) 	NVQ level 2 in Playwork (This NVQ is awarded by C&G, CACHE Edexcel)
Playwork manager Playwork development officer Senior playworker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 3 Certificate of Professional Development in Work with Children and Young People (CACHE) • Level 3 Diploma in Playwork (CACHE) • Advanced Certificate in Playwork (NCFE) • Level 3 Certificate in Work with Children • Level 3 Diploma in Supporting Playwork Practice (Technical Certificate) 	NVQ level 3 in Playwork (This NVQ is awarded by C&G, CACHE Edexcel) City and Guilds, CACHE Edexcel, NOCN NVQ level 4 in Early Years Care and Education. This Award has a Playwork strand (This NVQ is awarded by C&G and CACHE)

This table and that on page 10 are subject to changes. The most up to date information on accredited qualifications can be obtained from the awarding bodies detailed in section 7 and in the useful organisations section. Details are also available on www.openquals.org.uk

5 QUALIFICATIONS FITTING YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES

A) Planning what to do after school?

There has never been a better time to build a career working with children. There are many career paths available up to management or senior practitioner level. If you want to work with children but aren't sure of the type of job you want, there are part-time college based introductory courses and Foundation courses. Both can lead to gaining a level two qualification. Your placements can be tailored to the setting you want to work in and you will also be given access to any study support you need.

► Quick tip!

Foundation courses give you the necessary insight into the wide variety of jobs available in the sector. They will help you to learn the basic skills for caring for children and how to support their development.

► Quick tip!

At 16 + you can take a 2 year full time Diploma in Childcare and Education course at a further education or sixth form college leading directly to a level 3 qualification. It covers children's development from birth up to 8 years old as well as working with parents and carers and you will have plenty of work placements to gain valuable experience.



B) Want to work and earn whilst you train?

Apprenticeships are now the main route to free work based training for those under 25 years old and are now available in the early years care and education field.

Apprentices will learn how to design educational and recreational activities, avoid conflicts, handle difficult situations and understand the unique relationship that childcare workers can have with children in their care.

There are two levels

- Young Apprenticeships usually last at least a year and apprentices work towards a National Vocational Qualification at Level 2, Key Skills and Technical Certificates
- Advanced Apprenticeships usually last at least two years and apprentices work towards a National Vocational Qualification at Level 3, Key Skills and Technical Certificates

There are no set entry requirements for Apprenticeships. You just need to be living in England, aged 16 or above and not taking part in full-time education.

▶ Quick tip!

Speak to your careers teacher or local Connexions personal adviser or visit www.connexions.gov.uk

www.surestart.gov.uk/childcarecareers

For more information on Apprenticeships and to find local opportunities near you visit www.apprenticeships.org.uk or call the help line on 08000 150600

C) Thinking of a change in career?

If you've never worked with children before or want to return to work with children after a career break, why not find out more about opportunities in childcare or playwork before committing yourself. Taster workshops and introductory sessions run by your local authority explain more about different job opportunities, training and qualifications options available in your area. These give a good opportunity to understand in more detail what the work involves.

You can then find a job or volunteer role where you can gain a qualification while you work or you may want to take a college-based course. If you have your own childcare responsibilities, your college will advise you on support available for your childcare costs whilst you train. Check with your local authority's local childcare recruitment team for advice on funding available in your area to cover training costs and any additional support needs.

▶ Quick tip!

Taster courses: Contact your local Children's Information Service or childcare recruitment team through your local authority for taster courses.

Visit www.surestart.gov.uk/childcarecareers

Visit www.childcarelink.gov.uk or call 08000 096 026 for contact details for your local children's information service.

▶ Quick tip!

Making Choices is a taster course available in some areas – it gives an insight into different aspects of working with children and young people. It's an informal 15 hour programme which can be delivered in 3 hour sessions over 5 days. It is designed to be flexible and it's free!

D) Returning to childcare?

If you gained a childcare qualification some years ago or trained elsewhere but haven't worked in childcare for a while you can check if your qualifications are recognised by Ofsted for the job you want to do. There is now a qualification framework available for you to check if your qualification is recognised for the job that you want to do. Much has changed in the work of early years childcare, education and playwork and you may need some updating for example around the Foundation Stage Curriculum. If you need retraining contact your local authority recruitment or training team for a copy of the local training programme.

▶ **Quick tip!**

Check your qualification is accredited at www.openquals.org.uk

E) Want to work in a school

There are now more opportunities to work in a school setting as a teaching assistant. This term includes Early Years Practitioner, Learning Support Assistant, Minority Ethnic Support Assistant, Information Communication Technology Assistant and others who help teachers in the classroom or pre-school setting.

You need to apply directly to a school or your Local Education Authority for teaching assistant posts. You will be given induction training and can now work towards an NVQ up to level 3.

More information on teaching assistants can be found at:

www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingassistants

F) Are you currently out of work?

New Deal is a Government programme that aims to give unemployed people the help and support they need to get into work. Everyone on New Deal gets a personal adviser who is his or her point of contact throughout the programme. The personal adviser takes the time to understand you – your experiences, interests and goals – so a plan can be prepared to get you into a suitable job. New Deal options are open to younger and older unemployed workers, people with disabilities and lone parents wishing to return to work. You can also get help with your childcare costs.

Even if you are not eligible for a New Deal programme, your local Jobcentre can help you find out about opportunities to work in this area.

▶ **Quick tip!**

Contact New Deal through your local Jobcentre Plus or tel **0845 6062626**
www.newdeal.gov.uk



G) Already working in the childcare or playwork field?

If you are already working in childcare or playwork you will be able to gain a recognised qualification by working towards an NVQ while you work. Check which level qualification you could be working towards from the chart above and ask your local authority early years and childcare training officer, further education college or employer for training and NVQ opportunities in your area. An NVQ should be completed within two years but you can work at your own pace.

For those working in supervisory positions without an appropriate qualification you may be able to have your previous learning and experience working with children accredited through APEL (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning) which will help you in gaining a relevant qualification. There may be support for childcare costs and funding available for training.

▶ Quick tip!

Contact your local authority's childcare recruitment team and training providers for further information on courses and funding and APEL. www.childcarecareers.gov.uk is a good starting point to obtain local contact information.

Q Want a higher education qualification?

The Early Years Sector-Endorsed Foundation Degree (EYSEFD) is an exciting, new higher education qualification at level 4 that will lead to a new level of professional practice known as the 'Senior Practitioner'. The Foundation Degree is open to all those working in early years settings. Students will need to have a level 3 qualification in early years, childcare or playwork (or equivalent) and at least 2 years' experience of working in the sector. (Those students who do not hold a level 3 qualification may discuss APEL (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning) procedures with their intended institution of study.

Further information about the Early Years Sector Endorsed Foundation Degree is available at www.surestart.gov.uk/ensuringquality/training/foundationdegree and you should contact your nearest higher education provider or go to www.aimhigher.ac.uk for details of other education focused Foundation Degree and other degree courses.

For higher qualifications in playwork visit www.playwork.org.uk for the information sheet on higher education or contact Skills Active Playwork Unit at 020 7632 2021.

Q Working at home?

If you are a childminder, a Level 3 Certificate in Childminding Practice may be most relevant to your work. Even though it is not a requirement of registration it will help you to demonstrate your professionalism to parents. Some local authorities or local childminding association branches offer support or learning mentors to childminders working towards gaining a qualification. Contact National Childminding Association (NCMA) www.ncma.org.uk for further information or your local early years team.

Q Working with young children in a registered daycare setting?

Ask your employer about the chance to work towards a level 2 or 3 NVQ in Early Years Care and Education. Contact your local authority recruitment team or further education college on the routes available locally. You will be advised on whether you are entitled to any funding towards your course and support available towards the cost of childcare.

Q Working in a pre-school or playgroup?

For many parents helping out in your local playgroup will be your first experience of working in childcare. As an assistant in a pre-school or play group you can work towards a level 2 Certificate in Pre-school Practice which takes 240 teaching hours. You can then move on to a level 3 Diploma in Pre-school Practice if you want to be a playgroup leader. Contact your local branch of the Pre-school Learning Alliance or www.pre-school.org.uk for further information.

Q Working in a classroom with school age children?

Teaching assistants can update their knowledge and skills through Level 2 or 3 NVQs for Teaching Assistants. You can also study for a foundation degree or train to attain the standards for the Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA). Details of the HLTA standards and training and assessment routes can be found at www.hlta.gov.uk

Q Working in out of school and holiday play provision?

If you work part time, there are a variety of routes to gaining a level 2 or 3 in Playwork including appropriate part time college courses. For a list of locally available courses contact your local authority early years and childcare team. The Early Years Sector Endorsed Foundation Degree (working with children 0–8 years) which has a playwork strand is available for experienced practitioners.

A Playwork Sector Endorsed Foundation Degree (working with children 4–16 years) will be entering its pilot phase in September 2005. You can contact Skills Active for further information about current courses available: www.skillsactive.com



6 BUILDING YOUR CAREER

There have never been more opportunities to build a career working with children. Local authorities are working closely with local Learning and Skills Councils to provide on going local programmes of further training for existing childcare workers and the new Apprenticeship model will help many newcomers to train whilst they work.

Level 3 qualifications are available for those wishing to progress in management or to further their knowledge in specific areas. Level 4 and degree level courses, including the Early Years Sector Endorsed Foundation Degree, are becoming more widely available for those wanting to progress even further. Courses like these can lead to routes into teaching and management.

There are many careers working with children: teaching, supporting children and young people with special needs, playwork, social work, health, Connexions, youth and community work, foster care, mentoring and counselling to name just a few. Your local Connexions service will be able to help you find out more about these careers.

The government wants everyone working with children and young people to have a common core of skills and knowledge to help them work better together, communicate better and have a firm basis on which to build their career in children's services. The common core consists of six areas, each of which describes the essential



skills and knowledge that everyone working with children, young people and families should be able to demonstrate.

The 6 areas are:

- effective communication and engagement with children, young people, their families and carers
- Child and young person development
- Safeguarding children and promoting the welfare of the child
- Supporting transitions
- Multi-agency working
- Sharing information

These areas will be highly important in learning programmes for career building purposes.

7 KEY THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT QUALIFICATIONS

There are several awarding bodies in the UK for NVQs and VRQs. Different colleges will offer different qualifications but the most important issues are:

- The level of qualification you need
- That the qualification is appropriate to the job you want to do
- That the experience, training and study is in a place and over a time scale convenient to you

These are some of the **awarding bodies** you may hear about.

CACHE specialises in courses and qualifications in childcare and education for people who work, or want to work, in the sector.

City and Guilds (C&G) is a provider of vocational qualifications across a range of subjects in the United Kingdom. Their qualifications assess skills that are of practical value in the work place.

Edexcel offers a range of qualifications across many career areas. These include BTEC qualifications, as well as NVQs in childcare.

Education Development International (EDI) is an awarding body, part of GOAL which is a schools training provider.

National Open College Network is an awarding body for adult education through open college networks throughout the country. Qualifications available include basic skills, working with children and childcare.

NCFE is a national awarding body, which offers qualifications in childcare education and playwork, youth and community work.

Open University is Britain's largest university with more than 200,000 students studying at home or in their workplace. They offer degrees in a range of related childhood and playwork studies.

Don't forget to check that your prospective qualification is accredited www.openquals.org.uk

learn direct may be able to help you find the course you want www.learnirect.co.uk



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FINDING OUT MORE

Some good starting points are set out below together with details of a number of useful organisations.

To find out more:

- Call the national childcare recruitment order line, freephone 0800 99 66 00
- Call the childcare recruitment team at your local authority
- Visit the Sure Start childcare careers website at www.surestart.gov.uk/childcarecareers
- Call in at the nearest Jobcentre Plus office
- If you are aged 13–19 contact your local Connexions service: Call 080 800 13 2 19 Textphone 08000 688 366 or visit www.connexions.gov.uk

Useful leaflets

For further information on careers in childcare, the following information booklets are available to order free of charge by calling 0800 99 66 00.

Work with Children – an introduction to the various jobs available in the childcare sector (please quote reference: CRWorkwith).

Thinking about Childminding? Information about working as a childminder (please quote reference: Thinkingcm).

Useful organisations

Awarding bodies

City & Guilds 1 Giltspur Street, London EC1A 9DD. Tel: 020 7294 2800 Fax: 020 7294 2400 Email: enquiry@city-and-guilds.co.uk www.cityandguilds.co.uk

Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) 8 Chequer Street, St Albans, Herts AL1 3XZ. Tel: 01727 847636 www.cache.org.uk

Edexcel Stewart House, 32 Russell Square, London WC1B 5DN. Customer Services Tel: 0870 240 9800 www.edexcel.org.uk

EDI Education Development International The Old School, Holly Walk, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV32 4GL. Tel: 01926 458600 Email: info@goalplc.co.uk www.goalplc.co.uk

National Open College Network (NOCN) 9 St James Court, Friars Gate, Derby DE1 1BT. Tel: 01332 268080 Email: nocn@nocn.org.uk www.nocn.org.uk

NCFE Citygate, St James Boulevard, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE1 4JE. Tel: 0191 239 8001 Email: info@ncfe.org.uk www.ncfe.org.uk

Open University Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA Tel: 01908 653231 Email: general-enquiries@open.ac.uk

Training and Careers Information

Contact your local authority recruitment team based within your local authority. Details available on 0800 99 66 00 or visit www.surestart.gov.uk/childcarecareers

Professional Association of Nursery Nurses (PANN) 2 St James' Court, Friar Gate, Derby DE1 1BT. Tel: 01332 37233
Email: pann@pat.org.uk www.pat.org.uk

Learndirect Careers, planning and payment for childcare while you study. Helpline: 0800 100 900 www.learndirect.co.uk

National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA)
Promotes quality childcare and early years education. Oakhouse, Woodvale Road, Brighouse, West Yorkshire HD6 4AB.
Tel: 0870 774 4244
Email: info@ndna.org.uk www.ndna.org.uk

Pre-School Learning Alliance (PLA)
Runs its own courses and publishes information on pre-school work and training.
Tel: 0207 833 0991 www.pre-school.org.uk

National Childminding Association (NCMA)
Information on training and childminding generally. Tel: 0800 169 4486
www.ncma.org.uk

Daycare Trust (DCT)
Information and advice on childcare issues.
21 St George's Road, London SE1 6ES.
Tel: 0207 840 3350 www.daycaretrust.org.uk

4 Children Information and support services to help you train for and deliver high quality out of school opportunities for children and parents.
4Children, City Reach, 5 Greenwich View Place, London E14 9NN. Information Helpline: 020 7512 2100 www.4Children.org.uk

National Extension College (NEC) Has a wide range of accredited courses to help start your career in childcare or to develop your skills if you're already working in the sector. Courses are designed so you can study at a time and place that suits you. The National Extension College, The Michael Young Centre, Purbeck Road, Cambridge CB2 2HN.
Tel: 0800 3892839 www.nec.ac.uk/courses

Regulation, qualification frameworks and National Training agencies

The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)
Advice on requirements for working in early years, childcare and playwork, including registration of childminders. Alexandra House, 33 Kingsway, London WC2B 6SE. Tel: 0845 601 4771
www.ofsted.gov.uk

National Training Organisation for Early Years and Childcare (EYNTO) Pilgrims Lodge, Holywell Hill, St Albans, Herts AL1 1ER.
Tel: 01727 738300. Email: early-years-nto.org.uk www.early-years-nto.org.uk
The EYNTO provides advice on training and qualifications in the sector. Its functions will be taken over by the Sector Skills Council for Social Care, Children and Young People in April 2005.

The Playwork Unit in SkillsActive
Castlewood House, 77-91 New Oxford Street London WC1 APX. Tel: 020 7632 2000
Fax: 020 7632 2001 www.playwork.org.uk

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)
83 Piccadilly, London W1J 8QA.
Tel: 020 7509 5556 Email: info@qca.org.uk
www.qca.org.uk and www.openquals.org.uk

Learning and Skills Council (LSC) Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry CV1 2WT.
Tel: 0845 019 4170 Fax: 024 76 49 3600
Email: info@lsc.gov.uk www.lsc.gov.uk
Helpline: 0870 900 6800.



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Tel: 0845 60 222 60 Fax: 0845 60 333 60 Text phone: 0845 60 555 60 Email: dfes@prolog.uk.com

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Search using the ref: DfES-1129-2004

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PPCOLI/D21/1104/203

ISBN : 1-84478-304-9