

Warrington Early Years Employability Support Pack



A collection of support materials to help practitioners through changes to their employment or redundancy, those who are looking for different opportunities and anyone wishing to improve their workplace wellbeing



WARRINGTON
Borough Council

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Foreword

“It is widely accepted that the first five years of a child’s life are vitally important in determining their future. Alongside parents and carers, early years professionals play the greatest role in shaping those futures.

“A career in childcare carries great responsibility but also reaps great rewards as the practitioner guides the children in their care to grow, develop and to achieve their potential. However, the demands of such a role are often underestimated, and without proper support, can take their toll on individuals. The childcare sector itself is under increasing pressure, exacerbated by the recent pandemic. The needs of families fluctuate creating instability in the market, finances are stretched and the net result is often a staffing crisis.

“At worst, practitioners may find themselves facing changes to their employment, or even redundancy. This guide has been developed to help leaders, managers and practitioners to navigate difficult and stressful times in their career, and to make positive changes to their career path. We hope that it will contribute to a more resilient workforce whose wellbeing is valued and nurtured. This in turn will lead to the very best outcomes for our children.”

Cllr Sarah Hall,
Cabinet member for children’s services
Warrington Borough Council

Paula Worthington
Director Early Help, Education and SEND
Warrington Borough Council

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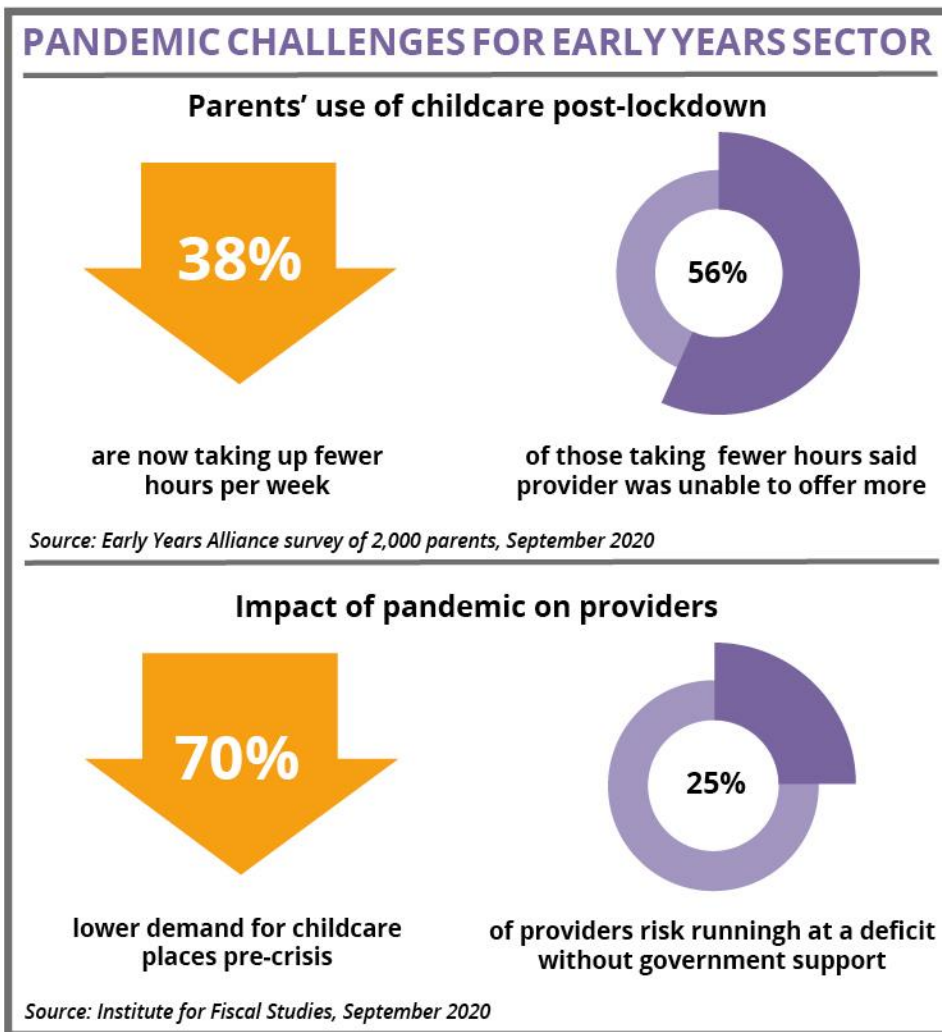
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Chapter 1: The childcare market and the impact of Covid-19.

Prior to the Covid pandemic, over seven million children in England used formal childcare. Many more used informal childcare, most frequently in the form of grandparents. For pre-school children, nurseries were the most commonly used formal childcare, followed by childminders. Once a child starts school, they may use breakfast, after school or holiday club in their school or at another private, voluntary, independent (PVI) local authority setting or a childminder.

Covid has highlighted the fragility of the childcare market. Providers previously reliant on fee-paying families found their income reduced with the introduction of the 30 hour offer and diminished further during lockdown. Following the return to provision many families have re-evaluated their childcare needs.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies reported that by mid-July 2020, the use of childcare was at 30 per cent of pre-pandemic levels. This drop in attendance has had an inevitable financial impact which in turn has seen a decline in staff numbers.



Many of us are considering changes to our work and personal lives prompted by COVID-19. Customer behaviours have shifted. Childcare providers should monitor these changes and respond to them. The important questions are; which of these changes will become permanent and which will eventually revert back?

The most successful businesses will be the ones that are quick to spot a need and meet it. For the childcare market to be sustainable through difficult times staff need to identify changing demands and be ready to take action. Here are some trends from the retail sector which can be applied to the childcare market. As a practitioner, are you able to help manage these changes and could you gain knowledge or skills to support them?

There has been an increase in online shopping. Some say use of such technology has leaped forward as much as ten years. As a result, people expect much more from websites and for businesses to have a greater online presence. Clearly you cannot deliver or use childcare online, but you can certainly find it, pre-select and connect with it. Online marketing is hugely important in how we reach, inform, connect and communicate with families. Make sure all your content is where it should be so that people can find you, for example national websites and local FIS directories. You need a constantly updated website that functions perfectly on mobile phones.

People want to support local businesses. Customers are seeking out real people, running local, independently owned businesses – this could be you. Relationships are becoming more discerning and interpersonal, with customers searching for services tailored to meet their needs. There are new opportunities here for childminders, smaller settings, and even larger chains to reconsider their local credentials and get their message across.

Instead of slow delivery services, people are liking the idea of curb-side pickups. The link here is more tenuous, but there is one. Drop-offs and picks-ups have been re-thought for safety reasons with convenience, routine and parental preferences in mind. Let's prioritise responsiveness, flexibility and change and balance these new arrangements with ideas to support other ways to engage and welcome customers.

Retail is growing its local delivery offer. This trend is about real people providing personalised and flexible services. For early years and childcare this is an opportunity to build on the strength of interpersonal relationships and to tailor delivery. If you are the business owner and you are usually in the office, now is the time to be visible, to connect and to be more present.

The fifth and final trend is towards **virtual experiences**. We have all entered a much bigger online world than we had before. Here, we should embrace technology to hold meetings and training, manage initial enquiries, have discussions, offer setting show-arounds, and provide setting inductions. Social media needs to be current, accurate and regularly updated and can promote the messages you want to get across at the time to meet the current trends and needs.

PEST Analysis

PEST analysis is a useful tool for understanding how the things going on around your setting may impact on your business and your plans. PEST is an acronym for Political, Economic, Social and Technological factors. PEST analysis is simple, quick, and uses four key perspectives. PEST factors are essentially external so it is useful to help you consider the environment in which your service is provided.

We have given an example below of how you might complete a PEST analysis.

Political Eg 30 Hours, Pensions legislation, National living wage, National Funding Formula, Ofsted, H&S, Covid-19 guidance.	Economic Eg New businesses, recession, changes to benefits etc.
Social Eg Flexible working, working from home, weekend working, parental concerns and attitudes, and atypical hours.	Technological Eg Social media, virtual tours, electronic payments via email and internet.



Chapter 2: The importance of the childcare workforce

It is generally agreed that the first five years of a child's life are critical to their future development¹. During this period, stark development gaps often appear between children from poorer and more affluent backgrounds. Key to closing these gaps – which influence life chances – are early years and childcare professionals.

Early years childcare plays a vital role in safeguarding vulnerable children, and can improve social mobility. Research by the Sutton Trust²¹ has shown that children from the poorest families are already eleven months behind their more advantaged peers by the time they start school, but that early years childcare can help close this gap.

The Children's Commissioner for England in her report, 'Childhood in the time of COVID'³, states that for some children, spending more time with their families was one of the benefits of the pandemic but for many of the most vulnerable children the disruption has been damaging and compounded existing inequalities.

Even before the crisis struck, there were over two million vulnerable children living in risky home situations in England, including nearly 800,000 children living with domestic abuse and over one and a half million living with parents with severe mental health conditions.

During lockdown, early years and childcare was recognised as part of the keyworker workforce and an essential service to enable other keyworkers to play their part in crucial roles.

A career in childcare can offer transferable skills which can lead into teaching, social care, early help, children centres, nursery management and more.

- **Rewarding** – Working with children brings many rewards; it is a chance to see children develop and become confident, independent learners. Many practitioners working in childcare don't see their work as a job, they see it as an opportunity to make a real difference to a child's life.
- **Challenging** – Working with children varies so much from day to day it provides practitioners with constant challenge. Having certain qualities such as being patient, caring, passionate and hardworking will help during those challenging moments.
- **Fun** – A job that involves working with children is a fun one. There will be times when practitioners will be getting messy with children and helping them learn through play. At other times they may be planning outings, preparing for special events or working with a

^{1.} annafreud.org/insights/blogs/2020/11/precious-foundations-the-first-5-years-of-a-childs-life/

^{2.} suttontrust.com/our-priorities/early-years/

^{3.} childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/childhood-in-the-time-of-covid/

child that needs some additional support. Bringing an element of fun to all aspects of the job ensures that children feel happy and relaxed and get the most out of whatever you are doing.

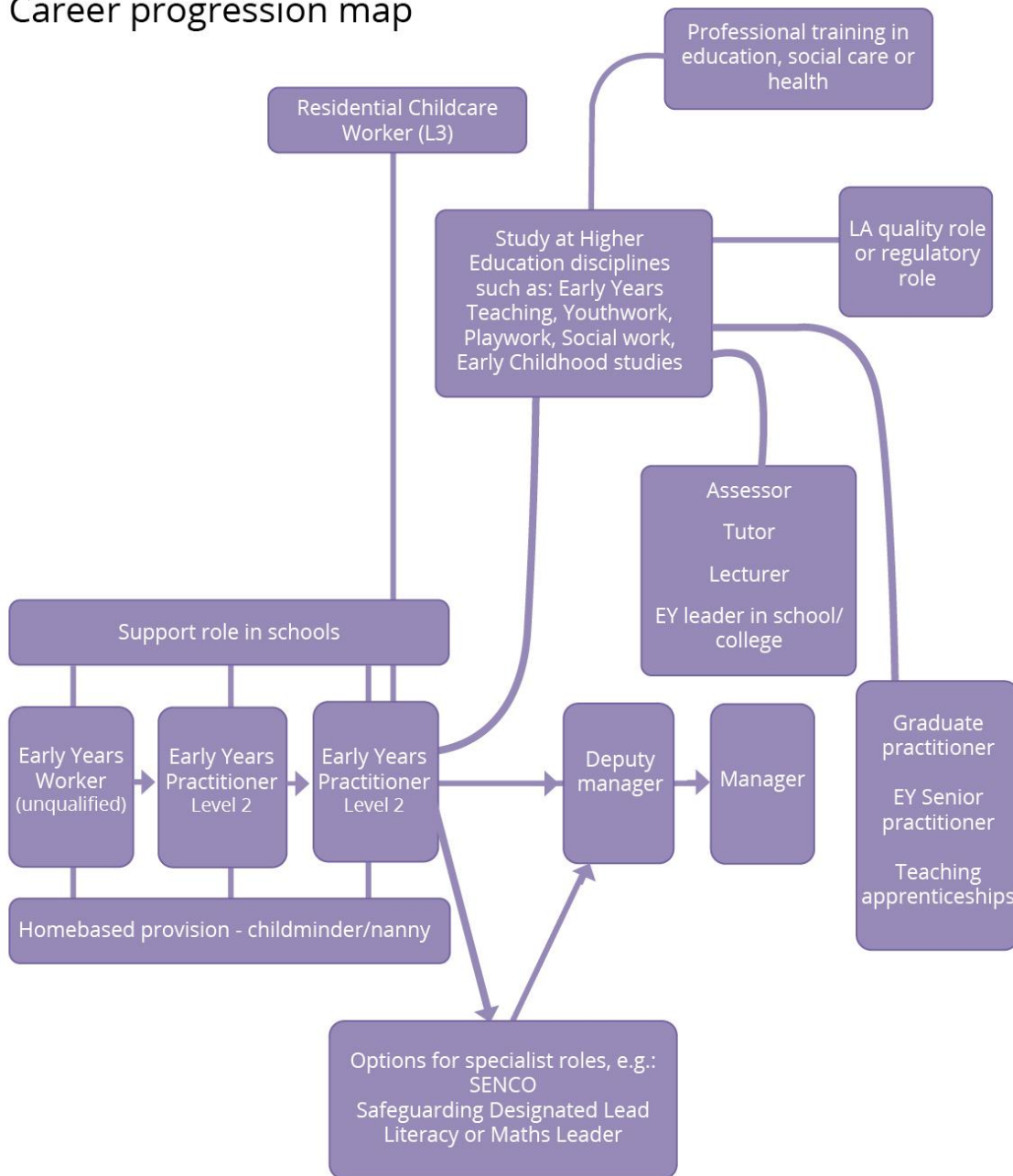
- **Working with others** – A career in childcare provides frequent opportunities to work with others, whether this is a team member, the nursery manager or other professionals. Many new skills can be learnt when working with others.
- **Route to progression** – People have to start somewhere on the career ladder and with the industry growing at a rapid pace there are great opportunities to train at a higher level. Chapter 3 illustrates some of the possibilities to move around the sector and develop your career.
- **Healthy work/life balance** – yes you can find childcare jobs that are 9am – 5pm, but there are also many with flexible hours that fit around your own family. You will also find that the work keeps you active all day keeping apace with lively young children.
- **Changing the future** - Today's children are tomorrow's future. Some of our most significant neurological development takes place in the first five years of life. Children's early experiences and the quality of their care and relationships are crucial during this time. This means your role in childcare can have an impact on a child's entire life.



Chapter 3: Career choices and progression routes

Early Years

Career progression map



Adapted from the Early years progression map supported by the DfE

- To check that the qualification you are interested in is approved by the DfE, visit gov.uk/guidance/early-years-qualification-finder
- For more information, go to gov.uk/government/publications/pathway-into-early-years-education

Other careers working with children and young people

What is Youth work?

Youth work focuses on personal and social development – the skills and attributes of young people – rather than to ‘fix a problem’. It is an educational process that engages with young people in a curriculum that deepens a young person’s understanding of themselves, their community and the world in which they live and supports them to proactively bring about positive changes.

Therefore youth work needs to be (and be seen to be) transformational, harnessing skills of young people not fulfilled by formal education.

- Where youth work provides a safe place to be creative
- Providing and developing a social network and friendships
- With a trusted adult (who knows what is needed)

Youth work offers young people safe spaces to explore their identity, experience decision-making, increase their confidence, develop inter-personal skills and think through the consequences of their actions. This leads to better informed choices, changes in activity and improved outcomes for young people.

How to become a Youth worker

For Information on how to become a youth worker go to the National Agency Website [on the NYA website](#) as this gives the most up to date information.

What does Youth work look like in Warrington?

Follow us on:

Twitter: @WarringtonYS

Facebook: @Warrington Youth Service

Instagram: @warringtonyouthservice

Teaching

Teachers continue the work of early years professionals in offering children the chance to reach their full potential through education. Teachers need patience and self-motivation, plus enthusiasm in abundance and the ability to inspire children and young people. There is a clear progression route within the field of teaching from Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT), through subject lead, senior leader, head of year (secondary schools), assistant head, and deputy head to head teacher. Teachers benefit from the school holidays but hours can be long involving planning and marking after the school day, and may include overnight stays at residential.

How to become a teacher

To become a teacher you will need to be educated to degree level including GCSE's in Maths, English at grade C/4 or above and also a science subject (to teach at Primary level). There are both undergraduate and postgraduate routes into teaching and financial support may be available depending on your circumstances.

For more information, visit [Steps to become a teacher](#).



Chapter 4: Skills audit – finding and filling the gaps in your CPD

A skills audit tool can help practitioners to assess the areas of strength in their knowledge and experience, and where there are areas for development. It is designed to help match strengths to potential job roles and to identify training and continuous professional development opportunities to support the to move into a new role.

Appendix 3 contains a basic skills audit to help you to understand where you might wish to concentrate the next steps in your professional development. You can choose to use it as a whole, or simply select the part you want to focus on. Your local authority may have an interactive version of the audit if you would like to take this exercise further. Please ask your local early years team.

Score 1 = None – 5 = Extensive

This tool is intended for use by you for your own development. It is not intended as a tool for management supervision. A manager could help you to complete the tool however, in a supportive capacity.

When completing, please:

- Be honest in your responses
- Consider all training and experiences including previous roles
- Look at training needs identified (scores below 3)
- Consider gaining constructive feedback from someone such as a friend or colleague

Each local authority will have an advice, guidance and training offer. To get help with training and continuous professional development in your area, visit your local authority website or contact your local Families Information Service.

Other sources of training and information include:

- [NDNA](#)
- [PACEY](#)
- [Nasen](#)
- [Future Learn](#)
- [Open Learn from The Open University](#)

This list is not exhaustive and there are many other sources of training for early years practitioners. Please be sure to check the credentials of training organisations to ensure that their products meet your needs and are of a suitable standard.



Chapter 5: Facing redundancy, writing job applications and preparing for interviews

Losing your job is considered as one of life's most stressful experiences. You may feel angry and emotional but it is vital that you remain calm and get the most out of the redundancy process to make yourself more employable in the future. This handbook will help you prepare for redundancy, or significant changes to your employment such as reduced hours or a different role.

1. Keep calm

Use our checklist below to keep track of the tasks you will need to complete as you go through the process.

2. Understand your rights

Check the ACAS website for information on your rights. Ask for a copy of your employer's redundancy policy, paying particular attention to exit terms and notice periods.

3. Ask for more

Don't be afraid to negotiate. This could include support for re-training etc.

4. Don't take it personally

If you think you have the basis on which to challenge the decision, be careful to focus on facts and policies, and take individual people out of the equation.

5. Maintain relationships

Keep on reasonable terms with your employer. They will be writing your reference for any future applications and they may even be able to recommend you within the sector.

6. Check your finances

Work out your financial situation so that you have a realistic picture of your finances and cash flow. Contact Jobcentre Plus to find out if you are entitled to financial help.

7. Take your time

Take your time to really consider your next career move. This pack will help you think about your strengths and areas for development and about your own stress triggers.

8. Increase your employability

Are there gaps in your CPD or experience that you could take the time now to fill? The Early Years Team may be able to help with training opportunities.

Checklist

Read your contract of employment and check your redundancy terms.

☐

Attend a meeting (virtually if necessary) with your manager.

☐

Ask for one if you are not offered one.

Check the [ACAS](#) website

☐

Check the government's website for further information. [GOV.UK](#)

☐

Your employer should explain the number of roles that are redundant and the reasons why. They may offer alternatives e.g. reduced working hours or pay. You need to decide whether or not these are acceptable. You won't get any redundancy pay if you accept an alternative job with your current employer before the end of your notice period.

☐

Citizen's Advice guidelines include making sure you get the money you are entitled to, paying tax or not, claiming benefits and help with rent/mortgages and debts. [Citizen's advice.org](#)

☐

Your employer should allow you time off to job search – if they refuse check the ACAS guide to redundancy and explain it to them or contact Citizen's Advice ASAP – there is a tight deadline for taking action.

☐

You could contact [National Careers Service](#) who can provide free advice on career changes, qualification and starting your own business.

☐

Ask your current employer for a written reference.

☐

Check through your finances with help from the [Money Advice Service](#).

☐

Adapted from the Preparing for Redundancy – Checklist 8 from the Directory of Social Change.

Job applications and interviews

Preparing your application

Completing a job application can be a daunting task at any time, but particularly if you are already feeling stressed or anxious about the situation you find yourself in. Our hints and tips should help you work through the process logically.

Firstly, think about your current and previous roles and the other things you're involved in (such as voluntary work or helping at your child's school) and write down what you do in these roles. You can then match your skills and experience to the criteria required in the person specification. This enables you to give examples and evidence to support your application.

Your work as a childcare practitioner means that you are likely to have strong organisation, communication and time management skills and work well both as part of a team and on your own. These are all 'transferable skills'.

Use the table below to start to list those skills against the person specification.

What do I do? / What have I done?	Person specification criteria

Next, think about some key achievements in your current or very recent job roles. This will help you to provide evidence when completing your application and can form the basis of your 'stories' when preparing to answer questions at the interview. This is your opportunity to sell yourself and to match your skills and experiences to the requirements of the person specification. You can add more boxes or change some headings to fit the person specification.

Photocopy this page so that you can repeat the process as many times as you like.

What did **you do?**

-
-
-
-

Person specification criteria

-
-
-
-

Working with others e.g. team members, partners etc.

-
-
-
-

Achievement, activity, scenario

Benefits to the organisation /customer

-
-
-
-

Barriers overcome

-
-
-
-

Impact /outcome/ result

-
-
-
-

Would you do anything differently next time?

-
-
-

Writing tips

Give yourself plenty of time to fill in the application form. Remember, this is the first opportunity you have to demonstrate your written communication skills. Write clearly and concisely using plain English. Don't waffle!

- use strong action verbs such as *transformed, delivered, accomplished, refined* and *inspired*
- choose descriptive words like *effective, consistent, reflective, motivated* and *adaptable*

Make sure you spell check your finished document and perhaps ask a friend to read it through for any mistakes or things you might have forgotten.

If completing a form online, it's a good idea to print a copy when you have finished, both for proof-reading and to have with you at interview in case the panel refer directly to it.

Interview preparation

Behavioural interviews

When you go into an interview, you need to leave your nerves at the door. Preparation is key, and the best way to prepare is to develop, beforehand, your own story (or stories). This technique is especially good for the behavioural or competency-based interview being used more today. The interview panel will be looking for evidence of how you have acted in real situations in the past. Having your 'stories' ready will help you to do well in this type of interview.

The most common competencies employers are looking for include:

adaptability, communication, decision making, initiative, leadership, negotiation skills, persuasiveness, problem solving, planning and organisation, resilience and tenacity, relationship building, teamwork and time management.

What is a behavioural interview?

Also known as "competency-based" interviews, these interviews go further than the traditional skills-based interview. This interviewing technique is used to determine whether you are a good fit for the job by asking questions about your past behaviour in certain situations. Your answers are then used as an indicator of your future success.

A behavioural question will be very specific. For instance when an employer asks a question such as: "Tell me about a time when you overcame a crisis, solved a problem, dealt with failure, etc." the focus is on a specific time in your past when you exhibited the behaviour about which

you are being asked. Here you must give an example of a particular action that you took at some point in your past.

How do you prepare for behavioural interviews?

The best way to prepare is to identify enough examples (stories) relating to your past achievements and experiences, where you demonstrated the behaviours and skills that are required for the job. The person specification will tell you the essential skills that they are looking for. Vary your examples, don't take them all from just one area of your job roles / life. Use fairly recent examples where possible.

In addition you may want to start by developing your stories around other areas: e.g.

- A time where you functioned as part of a team and what your contribution was.
- A time in your career or job where you had to overcome difficulties.
- A time in your job where you provided successful leadership or took the lead in a new initiative.
- A failure that occurred in your job and how you overcame it.

Ideally, you should briefly describe the situation, what specific action you took to have an effect on the situation, and the result or outcome.

The **CAR** approach will help you with this. CAR stands for **Context**, **Action**, and **Result**. It helps you to structure your answer like a mini essay. It works like this:

Context or circumstances	Make it concise and informative, concentrating solely on what is useful to the story. For example, if the question is asking you to describe a situation where you had to deal with a difficult person, explain how you came to meet that person and why they were being difficult. If the question is asking for an example of teamwork, explain the task that you had to undertake as a team.
Action you took	This should be the main part of your story. The more details and relevant skills you can add, the better. You will need to demonstrate and highlight the skills and personal attributes that the question is testing. Now that you have set the context of your story, you need to explain the actions you took. In doing so, you will need to remember the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be personal, i.e. talk about you, not the rest of the team.• Go into some detail. Don't assume that they will guess what you mean.• Steer clear of technical information, unless it is crucial to your story.• Explain what you did, how you did it, and why you did it.
Results you achieved	What happened? How did it all end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn? What might you do differently (if anything) next time.

A word of warning, you must have stories to back up anything you claimed on your application. All stories should include:

- A beginning (set the stage by describing the situation or task, the time etc.)
- A middle or process (what action you took in the situation or task)
- A resolution (how it ended)

How competency-based interview questions are marked

Before the interview, the interviewers will have determined which type of answers would score positive points and which types of answers would count against the candidates. For example, for questions such as "Describe a time when you had to deal with pressure", the positive and negative indicators may be as follows:

Positive indicators	Negative indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• demonstrates a positive approach to the problem• considers the wider need of the situation• recognises own limitations• is able to compromise• is willing to seek help when necessary• uses effective strategies to deal with pressure/stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• perceives challenges as problems• attempts unsuccessfully to deal with the situation alone• used inappropriate strategies to deal with pressure/stress

Tips for answering questions

Listen to and answer the question being asked

If you are unsure of the meaning, ask for clarification. Say 'Can you please rephrase the question, I'm not sure what you are asking?' or 'Can I clarify what you are asking...'

Do not give an unrelated answer no matter how useful you think the information is.

Don't waffle

Your response needs to be specific and detailed. Candidates who tell the interviewer about particular situations that relate to each question will be far more effective and successful than those who respond in general terms.

Be honest

Don't exaggerate or add on something which you did not do. You will probably be caught out and in the event that you are not and you get the job, you may find that you are unable to carry out some of your duties causing untold stress for yourself.

Answer in the first person

Get the right balance of using 'I' rather than 'we' even if the achievement was a team effort.

Throw 'hooks'

For example, if you were involved in some great achievement and the interviewer has not yet asked about it, you can throw what's called a 'hook', which is a statement at the end of an answer which is designed to whet the interviewer's appetite and encourage them to ask you to expand. You can then talk more about this particular achievement.

Behavioural interview questions

They are likely to start with:

"Give us an example of a situation where..." / "Tell us about a time when..."

- your communication skills made a difference to a situation
- you had to resolve a conflict with a colleague
- you dealt with a difficult client/parent
- you played a key role in a team
- you showed strong leadership
- you took initiative
- you set and achieved a goal
- you improved the way things were typically done on the job
- you changed your priorities to meet others' expectations
- you had to change your point of view or your plans to take into account new information or changing priorities
- you provided service to a customer beyond their expectations
- you were successful in getting people to work together effectively
- you were a member (not a leader) of a team, and a conflict arose within the team
- you provided negative feedback to someone about their performance
- you worked effectively under pressure

Final thoughts

Remember to spend some time well before your interview to craft and polish your short stories about your past. Take the best examples you can and make sure they relate to the essential criteria in the person specification. Practice them out loud, practice them in front of a mirror, and practice them often. These are your successes. Told well, they'll give your interviewers a clear picture of who you are and let them easily determine whether you're the right person for the job.

Top tip: Just before the interview, re-read your application, seeing your achievements in print will jog your memory and boost your confidence!

At the interview

Today, some interviews may be held over the telephone or via a video conferencing app. Nevertheless, it is important to prepare in the same way that you would for a face-to-face interview so that you give the right impression to the interview panel.

- Plan what you are going to wear in advance. It is important to look smart but you also need to feel comfortable.
- Prepare answers to typical questions that are sometimes asked (see table below).
- Prepare for behavioural questions – (see above).
- Practice your answers out loud.
- Prepare for the unexpected and minimize disruption if undertaking a telephone or video interview.
- Re-read your CV or application form beforehand. Take a copy with you to a face-to-face interview or ask whether to send a copy ahead of a virtual interview.
- Think of questions to ask the interviewer. This is where your research will pay off. Demonstrating your knowledge of the company will ensure you come across as a motivated individual. If you think you may forget what you wanted to ask, write them down.
- Plan your journey if travelling and check for potential delays.

From the moment the interviewer meets you, he or she will form an impression about the sort of person you are and what kind of employee you will make. Even when you are not speaking, your eye contact, body language and what you are wearing will all say something about you.

- Before entering the interview room, pause briefly, take a deep breath to settle your nerves and then enter the room at your normal pace.
- Greet your interviewer/s with a smile. This can help you to relax, as well as making you appear personable and approachable. Smiling also makes it easier to put expression into your voice, which suggests knowledge and enthusiasm.
- Good eye contact is essential, but avoid staring. If you face a panel interview, make sure you talk to everyone. Start with the person who asked the question and then other panel members.
- Your posture is important. Relax in your chair but don't slouch. Rest your hands on the table or on your lap to look composed, but avoid crossing your arms as this can be seen as creating a defensive barrier.
- When answering questions, try to relate your experience to the job description / person specification, i.e. the qualities they are looking for!
- Keep your answers concise and to the point – if you feel you have more you could tell them – say “I can expand further if you like” – this puts the ball in their court.
- Don't be frightened to ask for clarification if you haven't understood the question.

- Find out as much as you can about the job. Have interview questions of your own ready to ask. You aren't simply trying to get this job - you are also interviewing the employer to assess whether this company and the position are a good fit for you.
- When the interview is over, remember to ask when you can expect to hear back and what the next step will entail.

Typical questions that might be asked in traditional interviews

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about yourself • Why are you applying for this post? • Why do you want to work for / what can you bring to our company? • What makes you think that you are the best candidate for this post? • What are your main strengths? • How would colleagues describe you? • Why do you want to leave your current post? • What skills do you need to develop most? • Is there anything else you want to say in support of your application? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are you most/least proud of? • Looking back at your career, what do you feel went well and what could be improved? • What makes you a good communicator? • What is your management experience? (<i>if applicable</i>) • What makes you a good leader? (<i>if applicable</i>) • Do you prefer to work on your own or as part of team? • What makes ... a good team / ...you a team player? • How do you handle pressure? • What is the biggest decision that you have ever had to make? • What is your main weakness?
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After the interview

Always reflect on your overall interview performance and consider what went well and what you might do differently next time.

- Try to remember the questions you were asked and how you answered them.
- Write them down and ask yourself how you could improve in the future.
- Don't be afraid to ask for feedback if it isn't automatically given.
- Use any feedback constructively to improve your performance next time.



Chapter 6 Building personal resilience and managing stress

In this section we look at the causes and symptoms of stress, recognizing personal stressors, factors that influence resilience, and strategies to improve personal resilience.

Stress is:

‘The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them’ (The Health and Safety Executive)

It is the physiological and psychological reaction to the way we see or understand a situation.

How common is stress?

If you feel stressed, you are not alone.

- 1 in 6 people find work stressful
- Stress accounts for over a third of all new incidents of ill health
- Each case of stress leads to an average of 23 working days lost = 15.4 million days in total
- Stress costs society more than £5 billion per year
(Statistics from the HSE)

Stress is our bodies’ natural response to certain situations and sometimes, this stress response can be an appropriate, or even beneficial reaction. The resulting feeling of pressure can help us to push through situations that can be nerve-wracking or intense, like attending an interview. We can quickly return to a resting state without any negative effects on our health if what is stressing us is short-lived, and many people are able to deal with a certain level of stress without any lasting effects.

However, there can be times when stress becomes excessive and too much to deal with. If our stress response is activated repeatedly, or it persists over time, the effects can result in wear and tear on the body and can cause us to feel permanently in a state of ‘fight, flight or freeze’. Rather than helping us push through, this pressure can make us feel overwhelmed or unable to cope.

There is a difference between event or acute stress and chronic or long-term stress:

- **Event or acute stress** is sudden, typically short-lived, threatening event (e.g. giving a speech)
- **Chronic Stress** is ongoing environmental demand (e.g. marital conflict, work stress, personality). Chronic stress is more likely to lead to exhaustion and anxiety.

Too little stress can be as damaging as too much stress, leading to a person feeling passive, sleeping too much, and being inactive. Too much stress, and a person can become irritable,

disinterested in others and indecisive. At optimum stress levels, you should be sleeping well, be interested in things going on around you, and be able to make decisions most of the time.

Stress can affect all areas of life, but work is a common cause of stress, accounting for 44% of all work-related ill-health (HSE, 2020). It is therefore in an employer's interest to minimise stress in the workplace.

All employers have the legal duty to take reasonable care to ensure that health is not placed at risk through excessive and sustained levels of stress arising from:

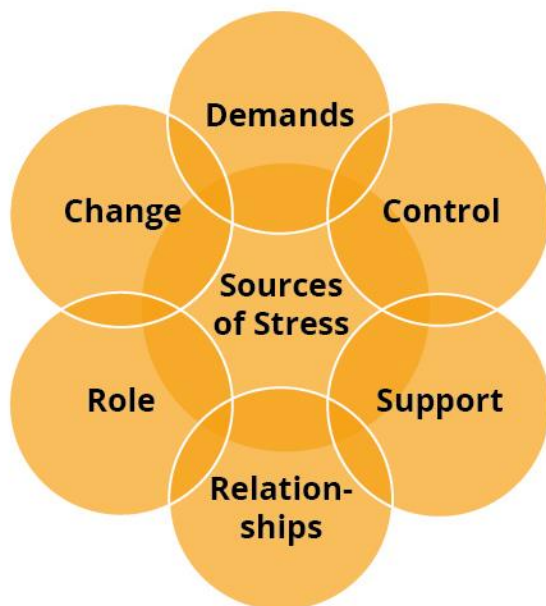
- the way the work is organised
- the way people deal with each other at work
- the day-to-day demands placed on the workforce

(The Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974)

Health and Safety Executive Management Standards

The Management Standards cover six key areas of work design that, if not properly managed, are associated with poor health and wellbeing, lower productivity and increased sickness absence. In other words, the Standards cover the primary sources of stress at work.

- the **demands** of your job
- your **control** over your work
- the **support** you receive
- your **relationships** at work
- your **role** in the organisation
- **change** and how it is managed



The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Management Standards Framework



Building resilience

To manage stress, you need to simultaneously reduce pressure and increase coping strategies. In the next section, we will talk about resilience, what it is and what you can do to increase it.

What is resilience?

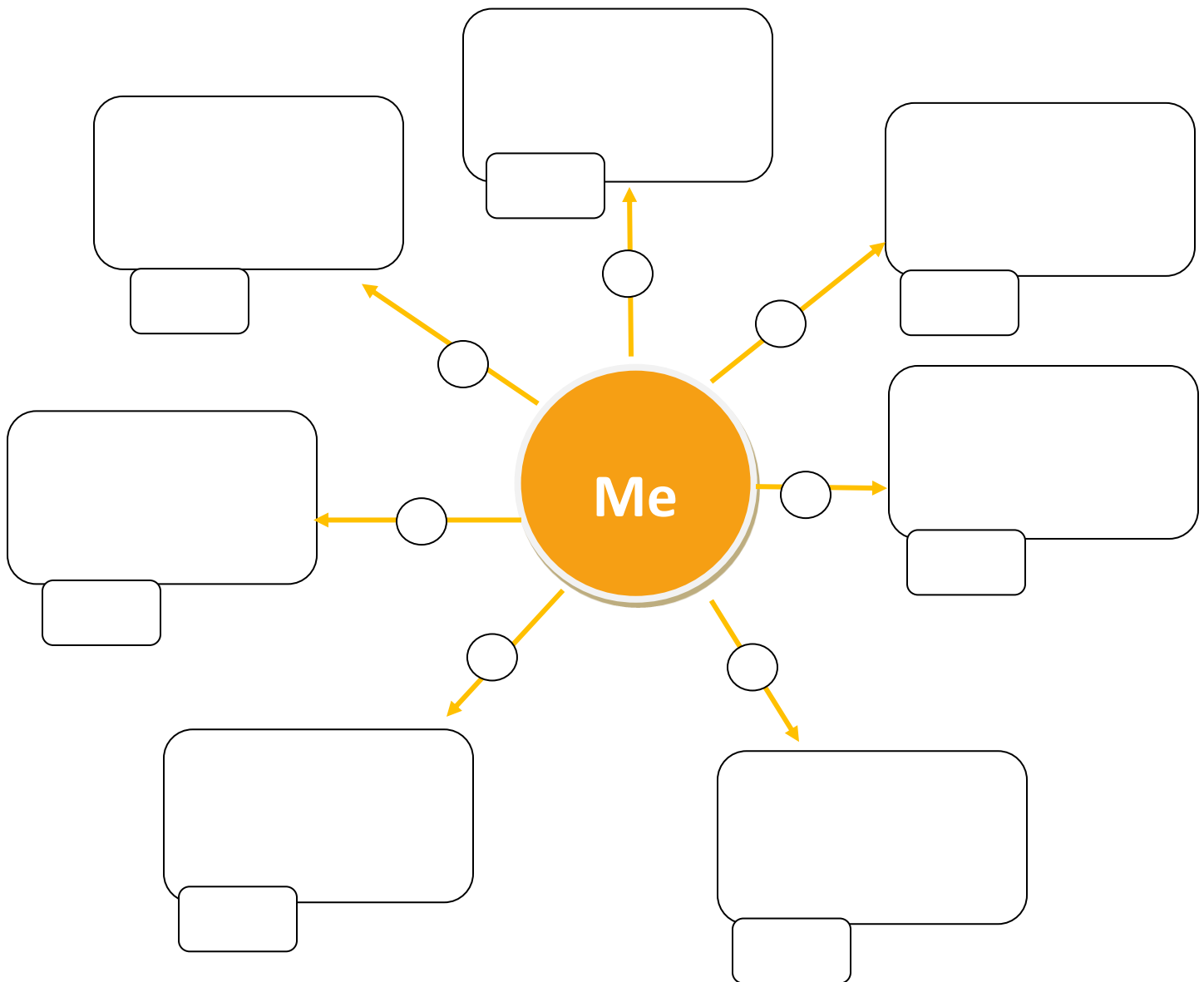
- the ability to bounce or spring back into shape after being stretched, bent or compressed
- the ability to recover from setbacks, to embrace change and to grow in the face of pressures and threats.

Attitude is the key influence on resilience.

Identify your stressors

Building resilience is a personal journey. What works for one person may not work for another and finding out what is best for you will involve some degree of trial and error.

The first step to building your resilience is to identify your stressors. Write them in the main boxes, then number them in importance in the circles. Use the smaller boxes to indicate whether you have the ability to change (c) or not change (nc) the stressor. Setting this out on paper and thinking about what stresses you the most helps to you start to take control, and to recognise where you can make changes. If you cannot change the stressor, it is even more important to change yourself by improving your personal resilience.



Take action

The next step to building resilience is to think about how you can take positive action to manage your stressors. You can use the table below for each, but start with the main one.

Write down your main stressor from your stress map

I will manage/limit/remove this stressor by

I will begin to do this by (date)

Someone who can help or support me is

I will know I have been successful when

Stability zones

Stability zones can be considered as those physical areas or belongings you are fond of and promote a feeling of wellbeing. You may be able to relax and feel safe whilst accessing your stability zones.

You can create “Personal Stability Zones” to help you manage change at work and in your life in general.

What are these Zones?

People who offer you a relaxing, or uplifting atmosphere when you're with them. They have values, interests or experiences similar to yours. They could be a spouse, friend, parent, family member or co-worker.

Places that provide somewhere to go to feel secure. Home is one place of refuge but it also can a larger space such as a beach, city or mountains or much smaller in scale like a specific room, or even your bath.

Things can also comfort, such as a favourite possession like your old teddy bear or a well-loved book, a family heirloom, or pictures and favourite clothes.

Ideas could be anything from religious faith and political ideology to deeply held beliefs or values (such as environmental protection, humanitarian concerns, etc.)

Organizations or groups that you identify with and where you feel welcome such as a favorite club, professional group, or workplace.

Rituals

These are enjoyable habits or routines that form part of, but don't dominate, your lifestyle. They are not obsessive behaviours.

Examples include:

- Walking the dog
- A morning tea or coffee
- Sitting in the garden
- Hobbies
- Weekend breaks
- Eating out
- Reading
- Watching old films or favourite TV shows
- Meeting a friend

Often, stability zones and rituals are linked together, for example, a morning coffee with a friend. Both stability zones and rituals can be important weapons in our anti-stress armoury, yet they are often set aside when we are under pressure.

The components of personal resilience

There is a growing amount of research showing the power of personal resilience when managing pressure and avoiding stress. You can probably identify certain situations where you feel more resilient and you can expand on and learn from these to build your resilience.

There are six key components to personal resilience:

Sense of purpose/ vision

The main component of the six and the foundation for all the others. The stronger your sense of purpose, the better equipped you are to handle challenges and setbacks. If unclear, it can lead to feelings of frustration and aimlessness. For many people, their sense of purpose is around a combination of; interests and hobbies, religion or spirituality, personal achievement or ambition.

Determination/ tenacity

How good are you at seeing things through? When faced with challenges, do you deal with them by having a 'can do' approach? Do you finish what you have started? Your ability to persevere when confronted with adversity will help your resilience. An important part of this is to be adaptable and open minded. A willingness to explore options and alternatives will provide you with a greater range of choices to deal with situations.

Positive realism/ reasoning

This is a balancing act between being able to think positively about a situation whilst being realistic about what can be achieved. Train yourself to look for the positives but have realistic expectations, in other words, keep things in perspective.

Self-management, self-reliance/ health

How well do you know your strengths and skills and your limitations? Do you take on more than you can do and struggle to say 'no'? You should try to achieve a good work-life balance for you and those around you. Looking after yourself mentally and physically will help you do this.

Relationships/ collaboration

People matter to us. Therefore your interpersonal and communication skills can be an important element of your ability to be resilient. Having people around you who you can turn to for support is a real asset. It is also powerful and restorative to be able to offer help and support to someone else.

Self-awareness/ composure

This refers to your knowledge of yourself; how you think, feel and react. What are the patterns you have in the way you deal with difficulties? Can you identify and develop the more positive ones? Resilient people are able to learn from their failures and break the pattern of negative

thoughts and actions. They accept responsibility for their reactions and understand what is within and without of their control.

Find out more:

- [Advice on stress, anxiety and depression](#) (NHS.uk)
- [Coping with stress](#) (BUPA)
- [Guide to Stress](#) (Mental Health Foundation)

If you are still feeling overwhelmed by stress, it is important to seek help from your GP or other health professional.

Final word

We hope that this guide has helped you to gather your thoughts at this difficult time and to plan effectively so that you can gain the most out of the situation.

Remember that as daunting and upsetting as redundancy or major job changes can seem, they can also present an opportunity to change direction, re-train or even set up on your own. Few of us would make such drastic changes unless we were given that push to do so but the results can be exciting and rewarding in the long run.

Good luck!

Appendix 1

Business is Great Britain	<p>Business Start up / Self Employment Advice</p> <p>The Government has developed “Business is GREAT Britain” to support new and existing businesses as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and practical advice to make your new venture a success • Expert advice to build and grow your business • Financial help to support innovation and new ideas <p>Access the website using the following link: Great Business</p> <p>Click “My Business Support Tool” and answer a series of questions which will result in direct links to business support / funding available in your LOCAL area</p>
Franchising Works	<p>Starting a Franchise Business Advice</p> <p>Want to go into business for yourself but not by yourself? Franchising Works has a wide portfolio of supported self-employment opportunities with funding available. For more information or to reserve a place on a free workshop call 0161 408 1313 or email info@franchisingworks.org</p>
National Careers Service	<p>Employability Skills & Funded Training</p> <p>National Careers Service can help with :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CV Preparation • Interview techniques/ Job Search/ Networking Skills • Digital Job Search • Funded training • Career Assessment / Skills Review (You will need this type of appointment to access funded training) <p>For more information visit nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk</p> <p>To book an appointment please call 0800 100 900. It is important to state that you are facing redundancy as this identifies you as eligible to apply for Skills Support for Redundancy or Rapid Response funded training.</p>
HMRC	<p>HMRC have produced a webinar which explains redundancy packages, tax refunds, and other income and tax credits in more detail.</p> <p>Follow the link below and enter the “Tax and change of career” section. Select Pre-Recorded webinar</p> <p>Part 1 – Redundancy Help and support for employing people</p>
Teaching information	<p>Please see information link below</p> <p>Teacher training</p>

Daily Jobseeker information	<p>DWP has launched an innovative new on-line job-seeking resource called The Daily Jobseeker which is hosted on Tumblr a popular social media website. It was developed to help people in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance and Universal Credit to meet the job seeking conditions of their claimant commitment. It also explains how Universal Credit will support them into work. It is updated every working day and gives <u>anyone seeking employment</u> lots of great advice on CV and interview tips, advice from recruitment experts and employers.</p> <p>Tumblr</p>
New State Pension Statement	<p>Find out online how much State Pension you could get, the earliest you could get it and what you can do to improve it. This is an online service for people of working age.</p> <p>Check your state pension</p> <p>Telephone: 0800 731 0175</p>
Pension Wise	<p>Pension Wise is a free Government service offering guidance to people over 50 about how they can make the most of the new pension freedoms</p> <p>Telephone : 0800 1383944 for a telephone or local appointment</p>
Pension Tracing service	<p>This on line service can help track down your workplace and private pension providers. The service is quick and easy. Just search for your previous employer or pension provider's name and the service trawls a database of 320,000 contacts to give you their up-to-date contact details.</p> <p>To find your lost pension visit</p> <p>Pension Tracing Service</p> <p>Telephone: 0800 731 0193</p>
Talent Retention Solution (TRS)	<p>The Talent Retention Solution (TRS)</p> <p>This puts skilled individuals and companies in contact with each other. TRS is a UK wide scheme which aims to retain skills in the Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Sector, including Aerospace, Automotive, Civil Engineering, Defence, Energy, Marine, Manufacturing, Nuclear, Power Generation and Renewable industries</p>

Appendix 2

Training Guide for Employees facing Redundancy

What types of courses are considered for funding?

Eligible individuals can gain funding for training courses across all industry sectors. You must be able to demonstrate that the course you choose is suitable, based on your skills and experience and will give you a realistic chance of getting straight back into work as quickly as possible. You can request training for a new career direction or self-employment but again must be able to demonstrate your suitability for this option. The National Careers Service / Jobcentre Plus will help you to source Education and Skills Funding Agency funded provision to meet your training needs.

How do I apply?

Ring the National Careers Service on **0800 100 900** and request a face to face appointment to discuss your needs with a local career adviser. **You should do this as soon as your employer informs you that you are at risk of redundancy** and please ensure you explain to the operator that you are affected by redundancy.

Rapid Response Support (RRS) Funded Training

RRS can only support short, job focused training which provides a nationally recognised qualification in your most recent / experienced occupation or if it is essential to start your own business. This excludes academic training and vocational training which requires a portfolio of evidence. The course must be designed to get you back into work quickly and should last no longer than 2 weeks full time to ensure that participation does not affect your benefits. Once you have received written notice of redundancy this training can commence before or after you finish work.

You must apply for RRS funding **up to 13 weeks before or up to 13 weeks after** your redundancy date. If you have a job offer in writing, pending a specific qualification or a Self-employment business case this will increase your chance of securing funded training.

The Discussion

This is a career focused meeting with an advisor who will discuss your practical experience, current qualifications and career aspirations. They will draw up an Action Plan to help you to reach your goals. They can refer you to local service providers to help you draft or review your CV, fine tune your interview skills, digitalise your job search and access funded occupational training. If this training is not funded locally as standard, the adviser will assist you to apply for Rapid Response Support funding from Jobcentre Plus to cover the cost.

Please prepare for the discussion

The more information you bring with you, the better. Below are a few suggestions that will help you make best use of the time available with the advisor:

- Your official redundancy letter if you have received this
- Your up to date CV
- Certificates of qualifications, licences, apprenticeships including in-house training courses
- Details of any courses that will help you to get back into work
- Examples of jobs which you have applied for or seen advertised recently
- Details of job offer / business case that is conditional upon you completing this course

How long will the process take?

Some courses are readily available for immediate starts. However, there may be occasion when you need to decide between travelling a longer distance to start immediately and waiting a few weeks for a start closer to home. You will be informed about the progress of your application and we would ask you to inform us if you no longer require the training.

If you decide to source and fund your own training, please be aware that these costs cannot be reimbursed by The Education and Skills Funding Agency or Jobcentre Plus under any circumstances. We are also unable to part-fund training courses.

Appendix 3: Skills audit for practitioners

1. Information and communications technology (ICT)	
I can use information technology including computers and the internet to communicate effectively with staff and families.	
I am able to add to child development records and follow internal recording procedures using a variety of data bases as required.	
I can use Office 365 to prepare, present and deliver reports and information to others.	
I am able to embrace technological changes and to develop the new IT skills necessary to apply it.	
I am able to use information technology to evaluate and develop written reports including presenting figures and supporting data in a variety of formats to meet the needs of the audience.	
I am able to use information technology to source written reports and policy documents.	
I am able to understand my role and responsibilities with regards to General Data Protection Regulations 2018.	
2. Pedagogy	
I have the practice based expertise in curriculum development and assessments.	
I have experience of working with staff and leaders to improve outcomes for individual children.	
I have experience of collating the range of information required to keep families informed about their child's progress.	
I have the required knowledge and experience to develop and/or implement strategies for monitoring and improving children's behaviour, safety, medication requirements, hygiene and first aid needs.	
I have experience and a good understanding of how to support and include families, staff and children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND).	

1. Information and communications technology (ICT)	
I have experience of Ofsted inspection and meeting the learning and development requirements.	
I have the knowledge and experience required to provide support and challenge concerning the implementation of the EYFS welfare and safeguarding requirements.	
I have a confident knowledge of emotional intelligence, i.e. capacity for recognising one's own feelings and emotions and those of others, this knowledge helps me to form positive relationships.	
I am able to use reflective practice in which practice is reviewed, analysed and adapted in the light of thinking about feedback from others, observations and interactions. This reflective practice is then used to amend and develop plans.	
I am able to observe learning and teaching, giving appropriate feedback, to children, parents and other team members.	
I am able to facilitate the sharing of effective practice.	
In Out of School provision I am able to promote the Playwork Principles which demonstrates a commitment to inclusive, child centred, play based provision.	
I am able to actively encourage providers to ensure that the voice of the child is heard.	
3. Working with Parents and Partners	
I am a strong communicator and committed to building strong collaborative relationships. I am able to use a variety of communication methods to ensure effective communication with others.	
I am confidently able to discuss sensitive issues with experience of conflict resolution and influencing consensus.	
I can demonstrate a commitment to ethical behaviour, values and honesty.	
I have the knowledge and commitment to effectively promote equal opportunities and diversity with all families and practitioners.	
I regularly reflect, listen and learn from a diversity of views.	

1. Information and communications technology (ICT)	
I can confidently engage mothers and fathers and involve them in their child's learning and development.	
I can confidently support and signpost families to access support from external agencies to address any additional needs the family may be experiencing.	
I develop positive relationships, with all colleagues and stakeholders.	
I have a solid knowledge of internal and external influences impacting families.	
I understand the impact of transitions on children's learning.	
I can work with specialist agencies to develop and implement individual child support plans.	
I effectively communicate, engage and involve parents in their children's learning, recognising the contribution that parents make to accurate assessments.	
I am able to signpost to, liaise and work in partnership with a range of other professionals and Local Authority officers, and external stakeholders as appropriate.	
I am able to confidently develop robust and smooth transition arrangements to support children's learning, including the role of the key person in a child's transitions both vertically and horizontally across a day, week, or period of time.	
4. Assessment for Learning AfL	
I am able to improve outcomes for all children, by improving the quality of pedagogy and assessment for learning.	
I have a sound knowledge regarding children's learning, development and care and how best to support a child's development within EYFS Framework and principles.	
I have a good knowledge of Early Years pedagogy.	
I am able to use observation based assessment for learning.	
I am able to effectively plan for personalised learning, development and care.	
I am able to support the development of targeted intervention strategies and programmes for Early Years that lead to impact on children and families.	
I can provide tailored support to those children with particular needs or disabilities, In line with SEND Code of Practice.	

1. Information and communications technology (ICT)	
I can implement observation-based assessments.	
I can monitor and evaluate key children's development and progress.	
I analyse child assessment data effectively (including EYFSP) to improve outcomes and provision for all children including disadvantaged children.	
5. Physical Space	
I have a current knowledge and relevant experience of complying with the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory guidance.	
I have a confident understanding of my role and the role of others with regards to risk assessment and health and safety.	
I have the knowledge and experience required to promote the importance of adhering to organisation policies e.g. on parental complaints or safeguarding concerns.	
I can confidently report concerns relating to non-compliance, in line with the provisions procedures.	
I can confidently support and challenge the quality of the Early Years environment, in order to improve outcomes for all children and to embed a culture of continuous quality improvement.	
I am able to model and confidently discuss the characteristics and features of high quality inclusive environments, both indoors and outdoors.	
I can promote to practitioners and parents the importance of play and exploration and active learning.	
I can support effective transitions and the continuity of care for children and families. This includes promoting the importance of key persons and attachment theory.	
I understand the role of the community in children's learning.	
I am able to model effective learning, including learning through play and child-led activities, both indoors and outdoors.	
I am act on and support specialist advice on the development of both the physical and emotional environment (indoors and outdoors) to support children's learning development and care.	
I am able to recognise and analyse effective practice and support its dissemination.	

1. Information and communications technology (ICT)	
I am able to work with other members of the team to improve the quality of the environment.	
6. Interpersonal skills	
I can demonstrate good interpersonal skills which are used to develop professional and collaborative relationships with families, leaders, managers and colleagues.	
I can demonstrate through my practice with others that I have the ability to develop trust, empathise, set boundaries, inspire and motivate others.	
I have good communication skills including verbal, non-verbal and listening skills.	
I have good emotional intelligence - the ability to understand and manage your emotions and those of others.	
I can effectively share my ideas to find mutually agreeable solutions to problems.	
I can use conflict resolution strategies and have the ability to resolve interpersonal conflict and disagreements in a positive way.	
7. Communication Skills	
I am able to communicate in an open way – including the ability to listen actively, respond, question, convey hard messages when necessary, support and challenge appropriately.	
I am able to maintain appropriate written records including; child observation and assessment records, safeguarding referrals, activity/continuous provision plans, emails and letters and information for families and other team members.	
I am able to provide constructive written feedback.	
8. Problem solving, evaluation and analytical skills	
I am aware of my own strengths and weaknesses and committed to personal development.	
I can use feedback from families to understand the stories of the children and their families.	
I have the ability to work with others to define and solve problems which includes making decisions about the best course of action to be taken and sharing concerns with managers at an appropriate time.	

1. Information and communications technology (ICT)	
9. Safeguarding	
I can demonstrate that I have the secure knowledge required to support safeguarding policies procedures across the provision, in line with EFYS requirements.	
I have a current understanding of the provisions safeguarding procedures in the line with the Local Authority's Safeguarding children's partnership requirements, including the Prevent duty.	
I am able to demonstrate that I can respond to safeguarding and child protection concerns with a consistent and transparent approach in line with local safeguarding partnership procedures and the provision's procedures.	
I can effectively support key children who have a Child Protection, Child in Need or Looked after Child plan.	
10. Anti-Discriminatory Practice.	
I have current knowledge regarding the impact of COVID on everyone including those from BAME heritage.	
I can use my current knowledge of risk assessments to minimise the impact of Covid on staff and families to reassure the families accessing the provision.	
I have a current knowledge of legislation and statutory guidance relating to Anti Discriminatory Practice and the Equality Act 2010 - protected characteristics.	
I can demonstrate that I can implement the providers, policies, procedures, ethos and attitudes to ensure the inclusion of all children and their families.	
I can demonstrate that I can form positive working relationships by adapting working practices to ensure that all children, young people, their families and practitioners feel equally valued.	
I can demonstrate that I can work confidently with colleagues and partner agencies to remove barriers to participation.	
I can demonstrate that I can actively promote equality of opportunity and good relations between children and adults who are different to each other.	
I can demonstrates that I am able to support the inclusion of children with English as an additional language by promoting positive strategies to providers which valuing children's home language while encouraging the development of language and communication in English.	