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## Flexible learning programmes for childcare practitioners: People and Business Development Ltd

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### Brief description

People and Business Development Ltd (PBD) has developed flexible study programmes that enable childcare practitioners to access flexible study beyond Level 3. Learners, therefore, have well-structured opportunities to develop their skills in their chosen aspect of the childcare profession from level 2 to level 5 and then beyond onto a foundation degree that can lead to early years teacher status.

### Overview – the provider's message

'We are really excited by this new level 5 qualification and the certificates we have created.



We have spent many years delivering apprenticeships to level 3, which confers a 'licence to practise' as a nursery manager. However, until 2013 there was no post-level 3 progression which did not involve taking time off for a traditional degree programme – something which many qualified practitioners are unwilling to do for financial, time or personal reasons. They can now complete a pathway, which has never existed before in the early years sector.

We have worked very closely with the childcare sector to develop this challenging set of new qualifications that enables learners who enter the profession at level 2 to progress all the way to achieve graduate early years teacher status. To

achieve this, we have concluded an accord with a local university which provides for automatic entry for our learners into the second year of a degree programme.

We have also included high-quality online resources and e-portfolios that complement the face-to-face provision so that students who do not have the time or confidence can take this bridge to higher education in a more flexible timescale.'

*Ross Midgley, Director*

## The good practice in detail

PBD has recently responded to a clear market need by developing a new diploma in leadership in early years and childcare at level 5. This qualification offers excellent professional development and career progression opportunities for those in the profession who have completed advanced apprenticeships or other qualifications at level 3. The [inspection report](#) highlights the very good use of technology and e-learning resources that support learning well and the very successful development of learning programmes to meet the needs of learners and employers.

### Escalators to higher-level vocational learning

The visible pathways to professional, educational and personal progression at levels 3, 4 and 5 and beyond at PBD have already motivated their learners to stay in the field and achieve early years teacher status. The new provision at level 5 is specifically aimed at those who are not yet ready to pursue a traditional degree but want to develop their careers and their leadership skills through learning while working. Staff have worked very closely with several employers to develop learning pathways and qualifications which are suited to current ways of working in childcare and nurseries.

The progression route is now for learners to:

Take an apprenticeship in early years and childcare when they leave school



Progress beyond an advanced apprenticeship in a nursery



Study towards a PBD certificate, as soon as they get a leadership role



Top this up to a level 5 Diploma



Move seamlessly into higher education to work towards a foundation or honours degree and achieve early years teacher status.

Current students are positive about the impact of the course and the new career pathway.

### New technologies to provide flexibility in design and delivery of the provision

All the learning programmes at PBD include extensive use of technologies, including a virtual learning environment (VLE) with a very wide range of resources. Apprentices on programmes at levels 2 and 3 make especially good use of the VLE to support their learning towards qualifications in functional mathematics and English. The VLE features in a case study published on Ofsted’s website (<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/virtual-learning-environments-e-portfolio>) which describes how it can include training materials that have been specifically adapted according to the requirements and contexts of individual employers. The VLE now includes a separate collection of appropriate resources for learners on level 5 courses that have been developed in conjunction with a senior academic at a local university.

‘I am finding my Level 5 challenging. The course is already having a positive effect on my practice. The resources are excellent. I am very happy that I have chosen this path to further my career.’

*Learner*

PBD’s staff have carefully mapped the units of the qualifications to subject-related themes. Each theme is delivered with a set of related resources that build well on the existing materials on the VLE. This flexibility has helped make the qualification more attractive to potential learners and employers as each theme can be selected to ensure that it focuses on subject knowledge in line with the specific roles that the learners are carrying out at work.

‘ I cannot believe that I have come such a long way in my career since I left school. I knew I was capable, but I didn’t believe that studying at this level would be possible.’

*Learner*

The tutors and assessors, who all have direct experience as nursery practitioners and managers, use a wide range of technology to support their students on provision at all levels. Students have access to high-quality online resources and support, including an extensive library, online surgery, structured presentations, webinars and online recording of evidence.

‘This use of technology means that the provision of feedback to learners can be continuous, rather than taking place in ‘staccato bursts’ around

assessors' visits, as is often the way with traditional paper-based methods. ʘ

*Staff, PBD*

## Provider background

**People and Business Development Ltd** is based in a small business park in the delightful village of Steeple Bumpstead, near Haverhill. PBD started in 2007. The focus of its work is training for nursery staff, although it has now started to deliver qualifications in playwork, supporting teaching and learning, and business administration.

## Background

*It's about work...* the summary report of the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (CAVTL) highlighted characteristics and features of outstanding vocational teaching, learning and assessment. These are in line with the criteria for judging the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Ofsted's *Common Inspection Framework for FE and skills 2012*, but also focus on the additional, distinctive processes of design and delivery which characterise excellent vocational provision.

The case studies in this set were compiled in response to the CAVTL report which highlighted the importance of ensuring a 'clear line of sight to work' on vocational programmes.

**The Education Training Foundation** has been asked to take forward the recommendations from the Commission's report.

## Other examples in this set

Barking and Dagenham (employability): [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140003](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140003)

Barking and Dagenham (motorsport): [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140004](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140004)

Bridgwater College: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140005](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140005)

Exeter College: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130259](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130259)

Foxes Academy: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140006](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140006)

Hull College: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130258](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130258)

Leeds City College: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140007](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140007)

People and Business Development Ltd: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140009](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140009)

University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust:  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140008](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140008)

Wendy Shorter Interiors: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140010](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140010)

Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Get in touch [here](#).

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