

Skills for Care approval process

This process is valid from 1 April 2026 to 1 April 2027 and relates to:

- **Level 2 Adult Social Care Certificate** *Version 3 March 2026
- **Level 3 Diploma in Adult Care** *New August 2025
- **Level 5 Diploma in Leading and Managing an Adult Care Service** *New August 2025

Scope of document

This approval process relates to qualification criteria for:

- Level 2 Adult Social Care Certificate *Version 3 March 2026
- Level 3 Diploma in Adult Care *New August 2025
- Level 5 Diploma in Leading and Managing an Adult Care Service *New August 2025.

Where awarding organisations wish to seek approval for other qualifications, please see our [awarding organisations webpage](#) or contact the National Workforce Development, Capability and Skills team:

nationalworkforcedevelopmentandskillsteam@skillsforcare.org.uk.

Audience

Ofqual regulated awarding organisations planning to develop the qualifications identified above.

Introduction

The process for approving qualifications against Skills for Care criteria was originally introduced to support the transition from the QCF to RQF, in agreement between Skills for Care and the Joint Awarding Body Quality Group for Health and Social Care and Children's Sectors. Approving qualifications against set criteria supports the quality, consistency and understanding of core qualifications across the adult social care sector and were mandated within associated apprenticeship standards. It does not replace the awarding organisations responsibilities to register the qualification with Ofqual.

Positioning

It is expected that updated or developed qualifications specified **only** in this process will be recommended for funding by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) for 2026/2027 via the [Learning and Development Support Scheme for the adult social care workforce](#) (LDSS) for the adult social care sector workforce.

These qualifications align to Care Workforce Pathway role categories:

- new to care: Level 2 Adult Social Care Certificate
- care or support worker, enhanced care worker, worker personal assistant: Level 3 Diploma in Adult Care (*in some scenarios the L2ASCC could also be suitable e.g. new to role*)
- registered manager: Level 5 Diploma in Leading and Managing an Adult Care Service).

[Care workforce pathway for adult social care - GOV.UK](#)

Each qualification in this process also aligns to the mandated qualification within the appropriate apprenticeship standard.

Contact details

Should an awarding organisation have any questions about the qualification criteria or approval process, please contact nationalworkforcedevelopmentandskillsteam@skillsforcare.org.uk.

Process

The process for awarding organisations to follow to seek approval for a qualification is outlined below.

Step 1: Access qualification criteria

Skills for Care make criteria available to awarding organisations [via our website](#). All awarding organisations have access to the criteria.

Step 2: Submit intention to proceed

Awarding organisations must notify Skills for Care by email of their intention to proceed in updating or developing the qualification for approval against our criteria by 31 Dec 2026.

Your intention to proceed should be submitted to nationalworkforcedevelopmentandskillsteam@skillsforcare.org.uk and include the following information:

- awarding organisation name
- qualification title
- contact details for person responsible for qualification development
- estimated date for submitting your qualification for approval.

Step 3: Advice and guidance

We will provide a support session to Awarding Organisations to support the development process where required.

Through your development process, colleagues from Skills for Care's National Workforce Development, Capability and Skills team are available to offer advice and guidance to support you. This includes feedback on sample content, materials or structures. This is designed to highlight any issues at an early point and so maximise the efficiency of the final review process. Please send sample content to: nationalworkforcedevelopmentandskillsteam@skillsforcare.org.uk.

Step 4: Submit qualification for review

When submitting a qualification for review and approval against Skills for Care criteria, please complete a Skills for Care 'mapping template'. This will have been provided when you sent your intention to proceed information. A full qualification specification (including mandatory and optional units) and any required documents should also be submitted with the completed 'mapping template'.

To ensure a fair, consistent, and prompt review process the mapping template must be fully completed. If incomplete templates are submitted, further information will be requested, and the review will be placed on hold until all information is received.

Awarding organisations will need to submit their qualification to Skills for Care for review no later than 30 Jan 2027. This is to allow time for our review and any required amendments.

Step 5: Review and decision

Skills for Care will review the qualification against the appropriate criteria and issue a decision no later than 15 working days from receipt of **all documentation** listed in step 4 and providing the intention to proceed was received in good time.

Our response will be either:

a) Confirmation the qualification has been approved.

This means Skills for Care agrees the qualification meets the criteria requirements. Approval includes:

- Skills for Care's agreement to supply a letter of support to Ofqual for the qualification should this be required - if this is required, please request via nationalworkforcedevelopmentandskillsteam@skillsforcare.org.uk

- permission to use a branded logo on qualifications documents, subject to confirmation awarding organisations have received and read the Skills for Care code of conduct for logo use
- reference to, and promotion of, approved qualifications through Skills for Care literature and webpages.

b) Notification that the qualification has not been approved.

This means that Skills for Care has determined the qualification does not meet the criteria requirements. Skills for Care will supply the awarding organisation with an action plan indicating where further work, or amendments, are required.

Once actions have been completed, awarding organisations can re-submit as per Step 4. If actions are required Skills for Care will aim to review within 15 working days.

Where required we will provide additional support throughout the development process, we expect this to be a mutually beneficial scenario to maximise best outcomes for the adult social care workforce.

Cost of approval to awarding organisations

During development of the:

- Level 2 Adult Social Care Certificate *Version 3 March 2026
- Level 3 Diploma in Adult Care *New August 2025
- Level 5 Diploma in Leading and Managing an Adult Care Service *New August 2025

the costs associated with Skills for Care approving the qualifications are being supported by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and awarding organisations will not be charged a fee. Awarding organisations will need to submit their qualification to Skills for Care for review no later than 30 Jan 2027 to benefit from this. For awarding organisations proceeding after this date an approvals fee may be applicable, and this will be subject to on-going review.

Awarding organisations' responsibilities

In accepting Skills for Care's approval for a qualification and in using the agreed logo, the awarding organisation agrees to:

- support approved centres and training providers preparation in readiness to deliver the qualification developed - this could include supporting existing approved qualification centres and advising those who may be looking to becoming an approved qualification centre
- inform Skills for Care of any delays, issues or risks relating to the development process

- place the qualification onto the Ofqual register and meet their quality requirements
- provide confirmation that the Skills for Care code of conduct for logo use has been received, read and understood
- ensure the Skills for Care logo is used in line with the Skills for Care code of conduct for logo use
- support centres to deliver the qualification in line with the [Skills for Care and Development Assessment Principles](#) and expected models of delivery
- agree for Skills for Care to provide updates to the DHSC on the development process and progress achieved with the qualification approval process
- work with Skills for Care proactively in the development process to ensure qualifications available for the workforce support wider quality, agreed delivery approaches and portability.

Skills for Care's responsibilities

In approving a qualification Skills for Care agrees to:

- include details of the qualification on our approved qualifications list hosted on our website
- liaise with the DHSC and recommended funding continuation or new eligibility on the Learning and Development Support Scheme (LDSS) for the adult social care sector workforce
- provide the awarding organisation with agreed approved qualification logo use and guidance for use on the qualification
- keep the approval process under review
- notify awarding organisations when updates are made to the approval process
- liaise with the DHSC and provide regular updates on feedback from awarding organisations and the progress of the qualification approval process.