



Training pathways and lateral-entry routes to qualifying as a Child and Youth Care Practitioner (*Erzieher(in)*) in Lower Saxony



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More professional staff in child daycare!

The present-day remit of a Child and Youth Care Practitioner (*Erzieher(in)*) encompasses the education and supervision of children, adolescents and young adults in socio-educational areas of work. This includes roles in crèches, nursery schools or after-school care centres, work with children and youth work, parenting assistance, socio-educational work in the school system, and positions in the sector “persons with special-needs”.

Training opportunities in Lower Saxony are extremely attractive. In two closely interrelated courses involving different organizational forms (part-time and full-time) – and, depending on participants’ educational background, with scope for credit transfer and fast-tracking – they prepare these students to take on this responsible role as qualified professionals.

Training pathways

- In the two-year specialist vocational school (*Berufsfachschule*) programme to qualify as an “Assistant Social Education Worker” (*Sozialpädagogische Assistentin / Sozialpädagogischer Assistent*), pupils who have a school-leaving certificate at intermediate secondary school (*Realschule*) level or higher initially work towards a qualification as an educational assistant (*pädagogische Assistenzkraft*) at German Qualifications Framework (DQR) Level 4. Additionally, the ‘*erweiterter Sekundarabschluss I*’ advanced lower secondary school-leaving qualification is obtained.
- Building on this vocational qualification, Assistant Social Education Workers undergo further training – on a School of Social Education (*Fachschule Sozialpädagogik*) programme – to also qualify as a Child and Youth Care Practitioner (*Erzieher(in)*). They also attain DQR Level 6 and an entrance qualification for a technical college / university of applied sciences (*Fachhochschule*).
- Both training courses integrate – involving input from the school – practical training in relevant social-education institutions and conclude with a practical examination.
- During the 2016/2017 school year, the curriculum for those training under a specialist vocational-school (*Berufsfachschule*) programme to become an Assistant Social Education Worker, and for those on School of Social Education (*Fachschule Sozialpädagogik*) programmes, became entirely modular in structure. This means that achievements, as well as competencies acquired, can be recognized for subsequent courses of study and for foreign-based roles sought (DQR Level 6, European Qualifications Framework (EQR) Level 6). Additionally, various modules on the School (*Fachschule*) of Social Education programme build on those completed under the specialist vocational-school (*Berufsfachschule*) programme, and their content can be interlinked, so that competencies can be enhanced on an ongoing basis and tailored to a broader spectrum of professional roles.
- The following link will take you to the Education Server for Lower Saxony, where information including the framework directives for both of these forms of training can be retrieved.

www.nibis.de (in German)



Paid, part-time vocational training while working

- The training format involved in qualifying as an Assistant Social Education Worker (*Sozialpädagogische Assistentin / Sozialpädagogischer Assistent*) specifically prepares students, either in full-time or (for those in employment) in part-time programmes, for work in an assistive capacity with children aged 0 to 10. Part-time vocational training while working, with participants paid by training providers, represents an augmented training opportunity. People with a higher-education entrance qualification (*Hochschulreife*) or a vocationally relevant background can complete the training as lateral entrants in as little as a year (full-time) or in one-and-a-half years (part-time while working). This means that Lower Saxony has the shortest vocational-training programme in the entire country.
- Assistant Social Education Workers can undergo further training to become a Child and Youth Care Practitioner (*Erzieher(in)*), either full time or part-time while in employment. Child and Youth Care Practitioners work with people aged 0–27 years. Their role is as group leaders in the relevant institutions. Those doing this course part-time in conjunction with employment can, having already gained an initial vocational qualification, be remunerated (as a regular employee) for their work while training. This three-year training pathway is to be made available to all Assistant Social Education Workers as an alternative to the two-year full-time *Fachschule* course that has been available thus far.
- Full-time training programmes to qualify as an Assistant Social Education Worker, and as a Child and Youth Care Practitioner, are eligible for financial aid – specifically, student funding under either Germany’s Federal Training Assistance Act (BAföG) or its Upgrading Training Assistance Act (AFBG) – subject to the relevant guidelines laid down.
www.bafög.de (in German)
www.aufstiegs-bafoeg.de (in German)

With these innovative vocational-training formats, additional educational opportunities involving dualized (i.e. vocational and academic) training elements are made available.

Lateral entry

Without compromising the current quality standards in Lower Saxony-based vocational training to qualify as a Child and Youth Care Practitioner (*Erzieher(in)*), lateral entrants are, in accordance with their educational and career background, granted one year's credit towards the total training duration.

The table towards the end of this publication provides an overview of the options for lateral entry.

An alternative route for those who wish to qualify as a State-Certified Assistant Social Education Worker (*Staatlich geprüfte(r) Sozialpädagogische Assistentin / Sozialpädagogischer Assistent*) is to take the examination as an external candidate (*Nichtschülerinnenprüfung/Nichtschülerprüfung*). This requires demonstration of knowledge and skills that coincide with, and correspond to, the goals of the vocational programme. Those who pass the examination as an external candidate can subsequently be admitted to the School (*Fachschule*) of Social Education programme.¹

The option of taking the exam as an external candidate is also available for the School (*Fachschule*) of Social Education programme; those who pass it can obtain a vocational qualification as a State-Certified Child and Youth Care Practitioner.

The following link leads to information on vocational training via either of these educational tracks, as well as on taking the exam as an external candidate.

https://www.mk.niedersachsen.de/startseite/schule/unsere_schulen/berufsbildende_schulen/ausbildung_als_erzieherin_erzieher/die-ausbildung-als-erzieherin-erzieher-6476.html (in German)

A level of educational attainment equivalent to a qualification from a vocational school (*Berufsschule*) can, alternatively, be substituted by an assessment to this effect – determining that the required knowledge has been obtained – by the admitting school. With the approval of the federal state's regional agencies for schooling and education (RLSBs), applicants can be admitted whose vocational and educational background indicates they will be successful on the School (*Fachschule*) of Social Education programme.

¹ The minimum admission requirements are satisfactory performance in German, and in both theoretical and practical aspects of the work-related part of the course.

Recognition of the FSJ and BFD voluntary gap year programmes

For lateral entrants, scope has been created for crediting past periods of relevant practical experience – including German voluntary gap year programmes such as the *Freiwilliges Soziales Jahr* (FSJ) and *Bundesfreiwilligendienst* (BFD) schemes – towards subsequent vocational training to become an Assistant Social Education Worker (*Sozialpädagogische Assistentin / Sozialpädagogischer Assistent*) or Child and Youth Care Practitioner (*Erzieher(in)*). These lateral entrants will generally have a technical college / university of applied sciences entrance qualification (*Fachhochschulreife*), a general higher-education entrance qualification (*allgemeine Hochschulreife*) or a vocational qualification.

Schools are aware of the various ways in which an FSJ or BFD voluntary gap year may count towards requirements. Proof of the nature of the experience gained on such a programme can be submitted to the school, and this period may – on a case-by-case basis – be credited accordingly.

Recognition of qualifications gained abroad

Additionally, relevant prior educational attainments – and professional experience – gained abroad in the field of social or preschool education can be credited on an individual basis. Requests to have one's qualifications and experience recognized should be made to the federal state's relevant regional agency for schooling and education (*Regionales Landesamt für Schule und Bildung, RLSB*).

Service centres of the federal state's regional agency for schooling and education: <https://www.rlsb.de/organisation/servicestellen> (in German)

The information portal for educational qualifications gained abroad: www.anabin.kmk.org (in German)

Retraining

Funding for retraining in Year 2 of the vocational-training programme to qualify as an Assistant Social Education Worker (*Sozialpädagogische Assistentin / Sozialpädagogischer Assistent*) is possible through Germany's Federal Employment Agency (BA). The federal state meets the costs involved in certifying institutions that provide vocational training, and the employment agencies have – since the 2015/16 school year – funded fast-track retraining to qualify as an Assistant Social Education Worker. For those undergoing retraining who do not fulfil the requirements for direct entry to Year 2, BAföG student funding is possible in many cases.

Graduates of this course who are suitable candidates can then continue and complete this vocational pathway by training part-time to be a Child and Youth Care Practitioner (*Erzieher(in)*) on the School (*Fachschule*) of Social Education programme while also in paid employment.

Scope for lateral entry in vocational training to qualify as a Child and Youth Care Practitioner (*Erzieher(in)*) in Lower Saxony

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Form of vocational training	Total hours (divided between theory and practical experience)	Admission requirement / scope for lateral entry	Duration of practical experience (as prerequisite)
Duration of practical experience (as prerequisite)	1,200 hours of theory 300 hours of practical experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Future) participants of an adaptation course (Anpassungslehrgang) for those with vocational qualifications gained abroad in the field of education and care provision • As appropriate, other case-by-case decisions by means of proficiency testing/assessment 	900 hours of relevant practical experience (including from previous vocational training)
School of Social Education (Fachschule Sozialpädagogik) Year 1	1,200 hours of theory 300 hours of practical experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational upper-secondary school (berufliches Gymnasium) for health and social studies (with a focus on social education)² • Relevant (social-)education qualification from a higher-education institution • Special-needs caregiver / curative educator (Heilerziehungspfleger) • Occupational therapist • Speech therapist • Breath and elocution instructor (Atem-, Sprech- und Stimmlehrerinnen/Stimmlehrer(in)) • Paediatric nurse (Gesundheits- und Kinderkrankenpfleger(in)) • Midwife • Nursing educator (Bachelor or Diplom degree) • Health and social-management professional (Gesundheits- und Sozialmanager(in)) • Sports therapist • Movement educator (Bewegungspädagoin/Bewegungspädagoge) • As appropriate, other case-by-case decisions by means of proficiency testing/assessment 	600 hours of relevant practical experience Scope for crediting relevant periods of practical experience completed during FSJ or BFD voluntary gap year programmes
Specialist vocational school (Berufsfachschule) programme to qualify as an Assistant Social Education Worker (Sozialpädagogische Assistentin / Sozialpädagogischer Assistent) Year 2	960 hours of theory 420 hours of practical experience (generally) 600 hours of practical experience for lateral entrants (as specified under an agreement by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the individual federal states <i>Länder</i> (KMK))	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General entrance qualification for higher education (allgemeine Hochschulreife) • Entrance qualification for a technical college / university of applied sciences (Fachhochschulreife) • Pupils who have completed the academic part of the entrance qualification for a technical college / university of applied sciences (Fachhochschulreife) – from a vocational upper-secondary school (berufliches Gymnasium) for health and social studies (with a focus on social education) – and who have a dual vocational/academic qualification • Childcare worker (Kinderpfleger(in)) + school-leaving certificate from an intermediate secondary school (Realschule) • Those who have passed the introductory course for nursery assistants (Zusatzkräfte Betreuung) in child daycare facilities • Vocational training + school-leaving certificate from an intermediate secondary school (Realschule) • School-leaving certificate from an intermediate secondary school (Realschule) + advanced qualification (Aufbauqualifizierung; childminders and playgroup leaders) + three years' experience working in a child daycare facility • Graduates of the two-year specialist vocational-school (Berufsfachschule) programme in Social Education • As appropriate, other case-by-case decisions by means of proficiency testing/assessment 	Scope for crediting relevant periods of practical experience completed during FSJ or BFD voluntary gap year programmes
<i>Berufsfachschule</i> programme Assistant Social Education Worker Year 1	960 hours of theory 420 hours of practical experience (generally)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-leaving certificate at lower secondary level (Sekundar 1) – school-leaving certificate from an intermediate secondary school (Realschule) • Graduates of the two-year specialist vocational-school (Berufsfachschule) programme in Social Education 	

² This applies to pupils who have completed the programme 'Vocational upper-secondary school (berufliches Gymnasium) for health and social studies (with a focus on social education)' without a dual vocational/academic qualification. Those who have completed this programme with a dual vocational/academic qualification can, if they have gained the vocational qualification 'Assistant Social Education Worker', enter the School (Fachschule) of Social Education programme without having to meet any further requirements.

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