1 Guidance title

Guidance on promoting the mental wellbeing of children in primary education using whole school approaches

1.1 Short title

Mental wellbeing of children in primary education (whole school approaches)

2 Background

(a) The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (‘NICE’ or ‘the Institute’) has been asked by the Department of Health (DH) to develop guidance on school-based interventions aimed at promoting good mental health among children aged 11 and under.

(b) NICE public intervention guidance supports implementation of the preventive aspects of national service frameworks (NSFs) where a framework has been published. The statements in each NSF reflect the evidence that was used at the time the framework was prepared. The public health guidance published by the Institute after an NSF has been issued will have the effect of updating the framework. Specifically, in this case, the guidance will support the following NSFs and other government policy documents:

- ‘National service framework for children, young people and maternity services’ (DH 2004a)
- ‘National service framework for mental health’ (DH 1999)
• Every child matters’ green paper (HM Government 2003), and Every child matters: change for children’ programme (HM Government 2004)
• ‘Higher standards, better schools for all’ (DfES 2005a)
• ‘Promoting children’s mental health within early years and school settings’ (DfEE 2001)
• ‘Excellence and enjoyment: social and emotional aspects of learning’ (DfES 2005b)
• ‘Healthy minds: promoting emotional health and wellbeing in schools’ (Ofsted 2005)
• ‘Bullying – a charter for action’ (DfES 2003a)
• ‘Bullying: effective action in secondary schools’ (Ofsted 2003)
• ‘The respect action plan’ (Home Office 2006)
• ‘Healthy living blueprint for schools’ (DfES 2004)
• ‘Choosing health: making healthier choices easier’ (DH 2004b)
• National healthy school status – a guide for schools’ (DfES 2005c)
• ‘Our health, our care, our say’ (DH 2006)
• ‘Making it possible: improving mental health and well-being in England’ (NIMHE 2005)

(c) This guidance will provide recommendations for good practice, based on the best available evidence of effectiveness, including cost effectiveness. It is aimed at teachers, school support staff and school governors. It is also aimed at others working with – or responsible for – children and young people. This includes professionals with a public health remit working within the NHS, local authorities (in particular, school and children’s advisory...
services) and the wider public, private, voluntary and community sectors.

3 The need for guidance

This scope defines mental wellbeing as emotional and psychological health, including the ability to interact socially. It is taken from the NHS Scotland report on monitoring positive mental health (NHS Scotland 2006). This definition is set out further in ‘outcomes’ (see section 4.3).

(a) There is limited national data on how to promote mental wellbeing among children of primary school age.

(b) In 2004, one in ten (10%) children and young people aged 5–16 had a clinically diagnosed mental disorder (ONS 2004). Older children (aged 11–16 years) were more likely than younger children (aged 5–10) to have a mental disorder (12 % compared with 8%).

(c) Research indicates that mental health problems among young people increased between 1974 and 1999 (Collishaw et al 2004). However, the most recent national survey of 5–16 year olds suggests that this upward trend was halted during 1999–2004 (ONS 2004).

(d) In 2004, boys were generally more likely to have a mental disorder than girls, and the prevalence of mental illness was greater among:

- children in disrupted families (lone parent, reconstituted)
- children with parents who have no educational qualifications
- children from poorer families and those living in disadvantaged areas

(ONS 2004).

(e) Data on the levels of mental disorder among children of different ethnic groups is difficult to interpret. However, children aged 5–10 who are white, Pakistani or Bangladeshi appear more likely to have a mental health problem than black children. Indian children are least likely to have a mental health problem (ONS 2004).
(f) Looked after children aged 5–10 were at least five times more likely than children in the general population to have mental health problems (42% versus 8%). Among 11–15 year olds, the contrast was slightly less marked (49% versus 11%), (ONS 2004).

4 The guidance

(a) Public health guidance will be developed according to NICE processes and methods. For details see section 5.

(b) This document is the scope. It defines exactly what this guidance will (and will not) examine, and what the guidance developers will consider. The scope is based on a referral from the DH (see appendix A).

4.1 Populations

4.1.1 Groups that will be covered

Children aged 4–11 in primary education. Establishing mental wellbeing has important consequences for social and educational attainment at primary school age but also later in the school career. It can also help to avoid behavioural problems later in life (Kuh et al. 1997; Graham and Power 2003). These children will include those attending:

- state sector maintained schools and independent schools
- special education environments.

If the evidence allows, specific groups of vulnerable/at risk children (such as those who are disadvantaged and school excludees) will be considered.

4.1.2 Groups that will not be covered

Children aged over 11 years and children not in school.
4.2 Areas/interventions

4.2.1 Areas that will be covered
The interventions/activities to be considered by this guidance will focus on primary schools and cover universal, whole school approaches.

Whole school approaches encompass how to use school policies, systems and structures to create an ethos and an environment that promotes mental wellbeing. For example, it includes the physical environment, links with parents and the community, and the management, development and support of teachers. Whole school approaches also include curriculum-based programmes and other activities aimed at developing the social and emotional competence of all students. (For example, by helping them to develop conflict management and problem solving skills.)

4.2.2 Areas that will not be covered
Interventions aimed at secondary school pupils (aged 11–18 years).

4.3 Comparators
Interventions will be examined, where possible, against relevant comparators.

4.4 Outcomes
Outcomes will be measured using the definition of ‘mental wellbeing’ set out in ‘Monitoring positive mental health’ (NHS Scotland 2006). Outcomes are measured using indicators and scales relating to the main aspects of mental wellbeing shown below:

- emotional wellbeing (including happiness and confidence, and the opposite of depression)
- psychological wellbeing (including autonomy, problem solving, resilience, attentiveness/involvement)
- social wellbeing (good relationships with others, and the opposite of conduct disorder, delinquency, interpersonal violence and bullying).
4.5  **Key questions**

The following questions will be addressed:

- What elements of whole school approaches are effective (and cost effective) in promoting the mental wellbeing of children aged 4–11 years old?
- What type of activities are most effective?
- What is the frequency, length and duration of an effective intervention?
- Is it better if teachers, school support staff, or a specialist (such as a psychologist or school nurse) delivers the intervention?
- What is the role of governors?
- What is the role of parents?
- What are the barriers to – and facilitators of – effective implementation?
- Does the intervention lead to any adverse or unintended effects?

4.6  **Target audiences and settings**

The guidance will be aimed at teachers, school support staff, school governors and others working with – or responsible for – children and young people. It will also be aimed at professionals with a public health remit working within the NHS, local authorities (in particular, school and children’s advisory services) and the wider public, private, voluntary and community sectors.

4.7  **Status of this document**

This is the final scope, incorporating comments from a 4 week consultation which included a stakeholder meeting on 17 November 2006.

5  **Further information**

The public health guidance development process and methods are described in ‘Methods for development of NICE public health guidance’ (NICE 2006) and ‘The public health guidance development process: An overview for stakeholders, including public health practitioners, policy makers and the public’ (NICE 2006) available at: [www.nice.org.uk/page.aspx?o=299970](http://www.nice.org.uk/page.aspx?o=299970)
6 NICE related guidance

Published

Clinical guidelines


Technology appraisals


Mental wellbeing of children in primary education (whole school approaches)

**Under Development**

**Clinical guidelines**


**Public health interventions**

Guidance for use in primary and secondary schools on sensible alcohol consumption.

An assessment of community-based interventions to reduce substance misuse among the most vulnerable and disadvantaged young people.

**Public health programmes**

The most appropriate generic and specific interventions to support attitude and behaviour change at population and community levels (due October 2007).
Appendix A Referral from the Department of Health

The Department of Health asked the Institute to:

‘Prepare guidance for schools on the promotion of good mental health in children.’
Appendix B References


Mental wellbeing of children in primary education (whole school approaches)


London: Ofsted.