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## PRESS RELEASE

# New NICE public health guidance on promoting children's social and emotional wellbeing

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) has today (26 March, 2008) issued guidance on promoting the social and emotional wellbeing of children in primary education.

The social and emotional wellbeing of children is important in their development, not only in terms of performance at school, but it can also help protect children against poor physical health, emotional and behavioural problems, violence and crime, teenage pregnancy and the misuse of drugs and alcohol.

This guidance has been designed to work in harmony with existing national initiatives in both health and education. The recommendations, which are aimed at education and healthcare professionals who work with primary aged children, Local Authorities and school governors, include:

- Commissioners and providers of services to children in primary education should develop and agree arrangements, as part of the 'Children and young people's plan' to ensure all primary schools adopt a comprehensive, 'whole school' approach to children's social and emotional wellbeing.
- Head teachers, teachers and practitioners working with children in primary education should provide a comprehensive programme to help develop children's social and emotional skills and wellbeing. This should include:
  - creating a curriculum that integrates the development of social and emotional skills within all subject areas;

- training and development to ensure teachers and practitioners have the knowledge, understanding and skills to deliver this curriculum effectively;
- support to help parents or carers develop their parenting skills and integrated activities to support the development of social and emotional skills and wellbeing and to prevent bullying and violence in all areas of school life.
- Teachers and practitioners should be trained to identify and assess the early signs of anxiety, emotional distress and behavioural problems among primary schoolchildren and discuss the options for tackling these problems with the child and their parents or carers.

Professor Peter Littlejohns, Executive Lead for the guidance, and Clinical and Public Health Director at NICE said: "Promoting children's social and emotional wellbeing can help improve their physical and mental health, performance at school and can address behavioural problems. A range of factors impact on how children feel, including their individual family background and the community they live in, so different agencies need to work together to agree effective strategies as part of a 'whole school approach'. This guidance sets out recommendations for use within schools and other settings, working with parents and educational specialists."

Professor Catherine Law, Chair of the Public Health Interventions Advisory
Committee (PHIAC) at NICE and Professor of Public Health and Epidemiology,
University College London Institute of Child Health said: "In developing this
guidance the Committee worked closely with the Department for Children, Schools
and families, taking into account both national and community-based initiatives that
are already in place such as the Healthy Schools programme. We have produced
recommendations that complement these programmes and will help local authorities,
schools and parents in promoting the social and emotional wellbeing of the children
in their care."

Ms Joyce Rothschild, PHIAC member at NICE and School Improvement
Adviser, Solihull Local Authority said: "The recommendations in this guidance are
both strategic and practical and reinforce good practice to which all schools aspire:
To provide an emotionally secure and safe environment that prevents any form of
bullying or violence, where children can be effective learners and integrate the
development of social and emotional skills within all aspects of school life. These
skills include problem-solving, coping, conflict management/resolution and

understanding and managing feelings. This guidance will help schools and Children's Services to ensure that children's social and emotional needs become a core part of their school experience. The guidance acknowledges the importance of children participating in the development of programmes relating to their social and emotional wellbeing."

Janet Shucksmith, Professor in Public Health in the Institute for Health Sciences and Social Care Research at the University of Teesside said: "Part of this guidance is helping to ensure that schools and teachers have the right skills, advice and support to help the development of children's social and emotional skills and wellbeing. Through this they will be able to provide a range of interventions, both for whole classes and for individuals, that have been shown by research to be effective, according to each child's needs."

#### **Ends**

#### **Notes to Editors**

#### About the guidance

- 1. The promoting children's social and emotional wellbeing in primary education guidance is available at: www.nice.org.uk/PH012
- 2. Primary education refers to all educational settings serving children aged 4–11 years.

#### **About NICE**

- 3. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) is the independent organisation responsible for providing national guidance on the promotion of good health and the prevention and treatment of ill health.
- 4. NICE produces guidance in three areas of health:
  - public health guidance on the promotion of good health and the prevention of ill health for those working in the NHS, local authorities and the wider public and voluntary sector
  - **health technologies** guidance on the use of new and existing medicines, treatments and procedures within the NHS
  - **clinical practice** guidance on the appropriate treatment and care of people with specific diseases and conditions within the NHS.