

Consultation on the evidence:

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

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

NICE was asked by the Department of Health (DH) in August 2006 to develop guidance for schools aimed at promoting good mental health among children.

The guidance will focus specifically on the promotion of child mental wellbeing in primary education. The two scopes covering: a) whole school approaches and b) targeted/indicated activities are available from the NICE [website](#):

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.

This is a synopsis of the evidence collated by NICE so far. This will be used by the Institute's *public health intervention advisory committee* (PHIAC) to develop its recommendations. This synopsis comprises the executive summaries of the reviews of the evidence of effectiveness and cost effectiveness.

The full reviews, economic appraisal are available on the NICE [website](#). Any material submitted by stakeholders during this consultation will be

assessed for its relevance using NICE standard methods, as set out in the Methods for development of NICE public health guidance. Relevant material will be included in a further report to PHIAC.

The draft guidance on the promoting the mental wellbeing of children in primary education using whole school approaches and targeted activities will be issued for consultation in August 2007.

1.2 Definitions

The guidance focuses on the promotion of the positive mental wellbeing of children. 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 (NHS Scotland 2006)).

This focus on mental wellbeing is critical to a child's social and educational attainment at primary school age but also later in the school career. Furthermore research shows it has important consequences for health and social outcomes in adult life (Kuh et al. 1997; Graham and Power 2003).

Whole school approaches encompass use of 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.

Indicated and targeted activities focus on particular types of behaviour or particular groups of pupils. They address the factors likely to lead to poor mental health or mental disorders. They may include ways of identifying

children at particular risk. A variety of methods are used including: programmes to help children make the transition to primary or secondary school, lessons taught as part of the curriculum, changes in school ethos and the environment, or activities involving the family and/or community. It may involve specialist inhouse services; or health, social or specialist community services may be used.

1.3. Reviews

The reviews of the evidence and economic appraisal are:

- *Systematic review of the effectiveness of interventions to promote mental wellbeing in children in primary education-universal approaches* (non-violence related outcomes). This review was carried out by the University of Warwick.
- *Mental wellbeing of children in primary education-targeted /indicated activities*. This review was carried out by the University of Teesside.
- *A systematic review of cost effectiveness analyses of whole school interventions to promote children's mental health*, undertaken by the University of Leeds.
- *Estimating the cost effectiveness of a universal mental health promotion intervention in primary schools: a preliminary analysis*, undertaken by the University of Leeds.

A summary of each review is appended to this document. The full reviews and the economic appraisal are available on the [NICE website](#).

1.4 References

Graham H, Power C (2003) *Childhood disadvantage and adult health: a lifecourse framework*. London: Health Development Agency.

Kuh D, Power C, Blane D et al. (1997) Social pathways between childhood and adult health. In: Kuh D, Ben-Shlomo Y, editors *A life course approach to chronic disease epidemiology*. Oxford: Oxford Medical Publications.

NHS Scotland (2006) *Monitoring positive mental health*. NHS Scotland.