

Costing statement: Promoting children's social and emotional wellbeing in primary education

Background

The guidance on promoting children's social and emotional wellbeing in primary education (NICE public health guidance 12) is for teachers, school governors and professionals with public health as part of their remit working in education, local authorities, the NHS and the wider public, independent, voluntary and community sectors.

The guidance complements and supports, but does not replace, NICE guidance on: depression in children and young people; and parent training and education in the management of children with conduct disorders.

Current environment

The recommendations complement and support key government policies including:

- 'Every child matters' (HM Government 2003)
- 'CAMHS Standard, National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services' (Department of Health 2004)
- 'Aiming higher for children: supporting families' (Department for Education and Skills 2007a)
- 'Every parent matters' (Department for Education and Skills 2007b)
- 'Extended schools: access to opportunities and services for all' (Department for Education and Skills 2005a).

The recommendations also support the following initiatives:

- 'National Healthy Schools Programme' (Department for Education and Skills 2005b)
- 'Social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL)' (Department for Education and Skills 2005c)
- 'Family SEAL' (Department for Education and Skills 2006).

Resource impact

A number of government policies and initiatives are already in place to support primary schoolchildren's social and emotional wellbeing (see above). As a result, it is assumed that the incremental costs of implementing the three recommendations in the guidance will probably be quite low. However, there may be a significant variation in practice at a local level. All relevant agencies need to assess what priority this is given locally and what additional services may be needed. There may be a financial impact in the following areas.

Staff training

Teachers and school staff need training to identify and assess the early signs of anxiety, emotional distress and behavioural problems (recommendations 1–3). Local training needs should be assessed by schools and by those involved in delivering the training.

Assessment of costs at a local level should include: the number of people involved, the level of training they require, the potential costs of the trainers (internal or external), supply staff (to cover for staff receiving training), venues, equipment and related administration work all need to be taken into account.

The guidance specifies that training should be undertaken by appropriately qualified clinicians but the method of delivery will be dependant on local circumstances and staff requirements. Examples of delivery of training could include: Inset training days for all school staff or multi-agency training for key staff members cascaded down to colleagues. In many schools, support staff

may also need training. Different training approaches could result in significantly different costs

Approaches

Whole school and targeted approaches are recommended to help children at risk from emotional or behavioural problems (recommendations 2–3).

The additional planning, preparation and assessment involved in developing a whole school approach could have resource implications as supply teachers might be needed to provide cover for permanent staff. Alternatively, these activities may be absorbed into the existing workload and would then be considered an opportunity cost.

The potential costs of a targeted approach include: payment for appropriately trained clinicians to carry out group sessions; the costs of additional staff time (including any resulting supply teacher costs); the costs of a venue, provision of crèche facilities for parenting groups; and administration costs.

Local service configurations would determine which agency bears the additional costs associated with providing a range of targeted approaches.

Savings and benefits

The guidance has a strong focus on the prevention of social and emotional problems. This may lead to a reduction in referrals to clinical services in the future.

In the long term, good social, emotional and psychological health helps protect children against emotional and behavioural problems, violence and crime, teenage pregnancy and the misuse of drugs and alcohol (Adi et al 2007).

Studies have shown that public service costs incurred in adulthood, by individuals diagnosed with mental health problems in childhood, can be as much as ten times more than the cost of people with no such history – these include costs related to the health services, social care and the criminal justice system (NHS Confederation 2007).

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It is not possible to quantify the long-term savings as a result improving the mental wellbeing of children. However, it can be assumed that the reduced costs to public services, including health care, social services, the police and justice system – and to the economy as a whole – could be significant.

Conclusion

While the recommendations in the guidance complement existing government policies and initiatives on children's health and wellbeing, some organisations and schools may incur additional costs as a result of implementing them. All stakeholders will need to assess local practices and circumstances to assess the financial impact.

Implementation of this guidance by investing in prevention, education and early intervention could lead to a significant reduction in public service costs in the future.

References

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