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NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND CARE EXCELLENCE

Guideline scope

Looked-after children and young people (update)

7 This guideline will update and replace the NICE guideline on looked-after
8 children and young people (PH28).

9 The guideline will be developed using the methods and processes outlined in
10 [developing NICE guidelines: the manual](#).

11 This guideline will also be used to update the NICE [quality standard](#) for
12 looked-after children and young people.

13 **1 Why the guideline is needed**

14 New evidence that could affect recommendations was identified through the
15 surveillance process. Topic experts, including those who helped to develop
16 the existing guideline, advised NICE on whether areas should be updated or
17 new areas added. Full details are set out in the [surveillance review decision](#).

18 **Key facts and figures**

19 In March 2018, 75,420 children and young people in England were looked
20 after. Of these:

- 21 • 73% were in a foster placement
- 22 • 11% were in residential accommodation (including secure units, children's
23 homes, and semi-independent living arrangements)
- 24 • 6% were placed with their parents
- 25 • 3% were placed for adoption
- 26 • 4% were with another placement in the community
- 27 • 3% were in residential schools or other residential settings

1 The main reason for children and young people entering care was abuse or
2 neglect (reported for about 63%). Only 29% of placements are long term and
3 50% of long-term teenage placements break down.

4 Looked-after children and young people have poorer outcomes in many
5 areas, including mental and physical health, education and offending rates.
6 The rate of mental health disorders in the general population aged 5 to 15 is
7 10%. For those who are looked after it is 45%, and 72% for those in
8 residential care.

9 Almost two-thirds of looked-after children have special educational needs.
10 They are more likely to be excluded from school, and 5 times more likely to
11 offend than the general population. At key stage 2, 32% of looked-after
12 children and young people reached the expected standard in reading, writing
13 and maths (compared with 61% of those who were not looked after) and were
14 5 times more likely to have a fixed-term exclusion.

15 They are more likely to become a single parent and are at greater risk of
16 teenage pregnancy and poor pregnancy-related outcomes such as smoking
17 during pregnancy, having a low birth weight baby, and depression.

18 **Current practice**

19 Local authorities have a duty to support looked-after children and young
20 people. This includes providing personal adviser support to all care leavers up
21 to age 25, if they want this support. Sectors cooperate to produce individual
22 care plans covering health, education and placement.

23 But the lives of looked-after children and young people remain disrupted.
24 Absences from school are common and contribute to lower educational
25 attainment. Frequent placement transfers are linked to poorer mental health
26 and less sense of belonging.

27 **Policy, legislation and commissioning**

28 The [Children Act 1989](#), the [Care Standards Act 2000](#) and accompanying
29 regulations and statutory guidance provide the legal framework for local
30 authorities, providers of fostering services and children's homes. The current

1 guideline duplicates existing statutory guidance. The update will place a
2 greater focus on the specific interventions needed to help professionals
3 improve outcomes for looked-after children and young people. It will
4 complement existing national statutory guidance which focuses more on
5 service delivery aspects.

6

7 **2 Who the guideline is for**

8 This guideline is for:

- 9 • social care, health and education practitioners working with looked-after
10 children and young people and care leavers
- 11 • commissioners and managers, policy makers and providers (including third
12 sector organisations) in the NHS, health and social care, public health and
13 local authorities who have the health, education and wellbeing of looked-
14 after children and young people as part of their remit
- 15 • commissioners, managers and providers of residential accommodation and
16 housing for looked-after children and young people and care leavers
- 17 • foster care agencies
- 18 • criminal justice system, including police force
- 19 • looked-after children and young people and care leavers
- 20 • birth parents, foster carers, corporate parents and prospective adoptive
21 parents.

22 It may also be relevant for:

- 23 • third sector organisations that represent the interests of looked-after
24 children and young people, their families, carers.

25 NICE guidelines cover health and care in England. Decisions on how they
26 apply in other UK countries are made by ministers in the [Welsh Government](#),
27 [Scottish Government](#), and [Northern Ireland Executive](#).

1 ***Equality considerations***

2 NICE has carried out [an equality impact assessment](#) during scoping. The
3 assessment:

- 4 • lists equality issues identified, and how they have been addressed
- 5 • explains why any groups are excluded from the scope.

6 **3 What the guideline will cover**

7 **3.1 Who is the focus?**

8 **Groups that will be covered**

- 9 • Looked-after children and young people¹ and care leavers (wherever they
10 are looked after) from birth to age 25², and their families³ and carers
11 (including birth parents, connected carers⁴ and prospective adoptive
12 parents).
- 13 • Children and young people who are looked after on a planned, temporary
14 basis for short breaks or respite care purposes, only if the Children Act
15 (section 20) applies and the child or young person is temporarily classed as
16 looked after.
- 17 • Children and young people living at home with birth parents but under a full
18 or interim local authority care order.
- 19 • Children and young people in a prospective adoptive placement.
- 20 • Children and young people preparing to leave care.
- 21 • Looked-after children and young people on remand.

22 Specific consideration will be given to:

¹ Children and young people in the care system under a court order and those under a voluntary arrangement are included.

² A child stops being looked after when they are adopted, return home or turn 18. But local authorities are required to support all care leavers up to age 25, if they want this support.

³ The guideline will cover interventions supporting the reunification of looked-after children with birth parents, but not the primary prevention of children being taken into care.

⁴ Family or friends who care for a child full time if their parents are unable to do so. This may be for a short period or permanently.

- 1 • looked-after children and young people with mental health and emotional
- 2 wellbeing needs
- 3 • babies and young children
- 4 • unaccompanied children seeking asylum
- 5 • children and young people who are victims of exploitation and trafficking
- 6 • young parents in care
- 7 • children with physical disabilities, special education needs or behaviour that
- 8 challenges.

9 **Groups that will not be covered**

- 10 • Children and young people who have been looked after in the past but are
- 11 currently not looked after (not including care leavers).
- 12 • Children and young people on the edge of care⁵, and their families.

13 **3.2 Settings**

14 **Settings that will be covered**

- 15 • All settings where looked-after children and young people and care leavers
- 16 live.
- 17 • All settings that deliver services for looked-after children and young people
- 18 and care leavers.
- 19 • All settings that target a specific issue and have an element or service
- 20 tailored to looked-after children and young people (or their parents, other
- 21 family or carers) or for which the impact on looked-after children and young
- 22 people is actively monitored and evaluated. This includes:
 - 23 – primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare
 - 24 – schools or other places of education
 - 25 – mentoring and advocacy schemes
 - 26 – mother and baby units
 - 27 – children and family centres
 - 28 – contact centres
 - 29 – reception centres for unaccompanied children seeking asylum.

⁵ 'Edge of care' refers to those children and young people 'whose safety and wellbeing are at sufficient risk for the authority to consider removing them from their current situation for their own protection'.

- 1 • Secure settings, including police stations, young offender institutions,
2 secure training centres and secure children's homes.

3 **3.3 Activities, services or aspects of care**

4 **Key areas that will be covered**

5 We will look at evidence in the areas below when developing the guideline,
6 but it may not be possible to make recommendations in all the areas.

- 7 1 Supporting care and placement stability.
 - 8 – Support for children and young people, birth families (with children
9 and young people under a full care order), foster carers, key workers
10 in residential care units, connected carers, prospective adopters and
11 special guardians, and social care workers to improve placement
12 stability.
- 13 2 Relationships.
 - 14 – Interventions to promote positive relationships.
- 15 3 Health and social care promotion: physical and mental health and
16 wellbeing during the care journey.
 - 17 – Interventions and approaches to support practitioners assessing and
18 supporting holistic health and wellbeing needs of children and young
19 people during their care journey, including completing physical and
20 mental health assessments and interventions.
 - 21 – Barriers to, and facilitators for, practitioners assessing and supporting
22 physical and mental health and wellbeing needs of looked-after
23 children and young people.
- 24 4 Supporting learning needs:
 - 25 – Interventions to support readiness for school.
 - 26 – Interventions to support learning needs.
 - 27 – Interventions to support entry into further education.
- 28 5 Preparing children and young people for leaving care.

- 1 – Interventions to support children and young people transitioning out of
2 care to living with their adoptive or birth parents or special guardians,
3 or into connected care⁶.
- 4 6 Preparing care leavers for independent living.
- 5 – Interventions to support young people transitioning out of care (or
6 from birth family homes with a full care order) into independent living
7 including life skills as well as entry into employment, training, and
8 higher education.

9 **Areas that will not be covered**

- 10 1 Universal interventions and activities to promote and improve key
11 outcomes that do not monitor or evaluate the impact of the intervention
12 on outcomes for looked-after children and young people, or their families
13 and carers.
- 14 2 Clinical treatments for specific conditions if the focus (for example,
15 surgery or drug treatment) is restricted to treating the condition.
- 16 3 Issues relating to the transition from children's to adult health or social
17 care services. This is covered in [NICE's guideline on transition from](#)
18 [children's to adults' services for young people using health or social care](#)
19 [services](#).
- 20 4 Issues relating to attachment of looked-after children and young people
21 to carers and social workers. This is covered in [NICE's guideline on](#)
22 [children's attachment](#).
- 23 5 Mental health and emotional wellbeing interventions covered in existing
24 NICE guidelines:
- 25 – [antisocial behaviour and conduct disorder in children and young](#)
26 [people](#)
- 27 – [attention deficit hyperactivity disorder](#)
- 28 – [borderline personality disorder](#)
- 29 – [depression in children and young people](#)
- 30 – [eating disorders](#)

⁶ Family or friends caring for a child full time if their parents are unable to do so. This may be for a short period or permanently.

- 1 – [obsessive-compulsive disorder and body dysmorphic disorder](#)
2 – [post-traumatic stress disorder](#)
3 – [self-harm in over 8s: long term management](#)
4 – [social and emotional wellbeing: early years](#)
5 – [social and emotional wellbeing in primary education](#)
6 – [social and emotional wellbeing in secondary education](#)
7 – [social anxiety disorder](#).
- 8 6 Health promotion interventions covered in existing NICE guidelines:
9 – [alcohol-use disorders](#)
10 – [alcohol: school-based interventions](#)
11 – [contraceptive services for under 25s](#)
12 – [drug misuse prevention: targeted interventions](#)
13 – [harmful sexual behaviour among children and young people](#)
14 – [immunisations: reducing differences in uptake in under 19s](#)
15 – [physical activity for children and young people](#)
16 – [sexually transmitted infections and under-18 conceptions](#)
17 – [weight management: lifestyle services for overweight or obese](#)
18 [children and young people](#).
- 19 7 Strategies, policies, system structure and the delivery of care (for
20 example, national, regional and local policies, assessments, targets,
21 standards, inspection and audit, multi-agency partnerships, referral
22 mechanisms, recording and communicating information, commissioning
23 and development) that is covered in statutory guidance about looked-
24 after children and young people.

25 **Related NICE guidance**

26 ***Published***

- 27 • [Stop smoking interventions and services](#) (2018) NICE guideline NG92
28 • [Child abuse and neglect](#) (2017) NICE guideline NG76
29 • [Drug misuse prevention: targeted interventions](#) (2017) NICE guideline
30 NG64
31 • [Eating disorders: recognition and treatment](#) (2017) NICE guideline NG69

- 1 • [Immunisations: reducing differences in uptake in under 19s](#) (2017) NICE
2 guideline PH21
- 3 • [Depression in children and young people: identification and management](#)
4 (2017) NICE guideline CG28 (currently being updated, publication
5 expected April 2019)
- 6 • [Community engagement: improving health and wellbeing and reducing](#)
7 [health inequalities](#) (2016) NICE guideline NG44
- 8 • [Harmful sexual behaviour among children and young people](#) (2016) NICE
9 guideline NG55
- 10 • [Transition from children's to adults' services for young people using health](#)
11 [or social care services](#) (2016) NICE guideline NG43
- 12 • [Children's attachment: attachment in children and young people who are](#)
13 [adopted from care, in care or at high risk of going into care](#) (2015) NICE
14 guideline NG26
- 15 • [Contraceptive services for under 25s](#) (2014) NICE guideline PH51
- 16 • [Domestic violence and abuse: multi-agency working](#) (2014) NICE guideline
17 PH50
- 18 • [Antisocial behaviour and conduct disorders in children and young people:](#)
19 [recognition and management](#) (2013) NICE guideline CG158
- 20 • [Antisocial personality disorder: prevention and management](#) (2009,
21 updated 2013) NICE guideline CG77
- 22 • [Social anxiety disorder: recognition, assessment and treatment](#) (2013)
23 NICE guideline CG159
- 24 • [Weight management: lifestyle services for overweight or obese children](#)
25 [and young people](#) (2013) NICE guideline PH47
- 26 • [Social and emotional wellbeing: early years](#) (2012) NICE guideline PH40
- 27 • [Alcohol-use disorders: diagnosis, assessment and management of harmful](#)
28 [drinking and alcohol independence](#) (2011) NICE guideline CG115
- 29 • [Self-harm in over 8s: long-term management](#) (2011) NICE guideline CG133
- 30 • [Child maltreatment: when to suspect maltreatment in under 18s](#) (2009)
31 NICE guideline CG89
- 32 • [Borderline personality disorder: recognition and management](#) (2009) NICE
33 guideline CG78

- 1 • [Physical activity for children and young people](#) (2009) NICE guideline PH17
- 2 • [Social and emotional wellbeing in secondary education](#) (2009) NICE
- 3 guideline PH20
- 4 • [Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: diagnosis and management](#) (2008)
- 5 NICE guideline CG72
- 6 • [Social and emotional wellbeing in primary education](#) (2008) NICE guideline
- 7 PH12
- 8 • [Maternal and child nutrition](#) (2008) NICE guideline PH11
- 9 • [Sexually transmitted infections and under-18 conceptions: prevention](#)
- 10 (2007) NICE guideline PH3
- 11 • [Alcohol: school-based interventions](#) (2007) NICE guideline PH7 (currently
- 12 being updated, publication expected August 2019)
- 13 • [Obsessive-compulsive disorder and body dysmorphic disorder: treatment](#)
- 14 (2005) NICE guideline CG31
- 15 • [Post-traumatic stress disorder: management](#) (2005) NICE guideline CG26
- 16 • [Self-harm in over 8s: short-term management and prevention of recurrence](#)
- 17 (2004) NICE guideline CG16

18 ***In development***

- 19 • [Children and young people with disabilities & severe complex needs:](#)
- 20 [integrated health & social care support & service guidance](#) NICE guideline.
- 21 Publication expected February 2021.
- 22 • [Children and young people with severe complex needs: social care support](#)
- 23 NICE guideline. Publication expected February 2021.
- 24 • [Infant, children and young people's experience of healthcare](#) NICE
- 25 guideline. Publication expected April 2021.

26 **NICE guidance about the experience of people using NHS services**

27 NICE has produced the following guidance on the experience of people using
28 the NHS. This guideline will not include additional recommendations on these
29 topics unless there are specific issues related to looked-after children and
30 young people:

- 31 • [Medicines optimisation](#) (2015) NICE guideline NG5

- 1 • [Patient experience in adult NHS services](#) (2012) NICE guideline CG138
- 2 • [Service user experience in adult mental health](#) (2011) NICE guideline
- 3 CG136
- 4 • [Medicines adherence](#) (2009) NICE guideline CG76

5 **3.4 Economic aspects**

6 We will take economic aspects into account when making recommendations.
7 We will develop an economic plan that states for each review question (or key
8 area in the scope) whether economic considerations are relevant, and if so
9 whether this is an area that should be prioritised for economic modelling and
10 analysis. We will review the economic evidence and carry out economic
11 analyses, using a public sector and other perspectives, as appropriate.

12 **3.5 Key issues and draft questions**

13 While writing this scope, we have identified the following key issues and draft
14 questions related to them:

- 15 1 Supporting care and placement stability:
 - 16 1.1 What is the effectiveness of health and social care interventions and
 - 17 approaches to support care placement stability?
 - 18 1.2 What are the barriers to, and facilitators for, supporting care
 - 19 placement stability?
- 20 2 Relationships:
 - 21 2.1 What is the effectiveness of health and social care interventions and
 - 22 approaches to support positive relationships?
 - 23 2.2 What are the barriers to, and facilitators for, supporting
 - 24 relationships?
- 25 3 Health and social care promotion: physical and mental health and
26 wellbeing during the care journey:
 - 27 3.1 What is the effectiveness of interventions and approaches to support
 - 28 practitioners in completing physical and mental health and wellbeing
 - 29 assessments for children and young people, and acting on findings?
 - 30 3.2 What are the barriers to, and facilitators for, promoting physical and
 - 31 mental health and wellbeing of looked-after children and young people?

- 1 4 Supporting learning needs:
- 2 4.1 What is the effectiveness of interventions to support readiness for
- 3 school?
- 4 4.2 What is the effectiveness of interventions to support learning needs
- 5 by either a learning provider or carer of school-aged looked-after
- 6 children and young people?
- 7 4.3 What is the effectiveness of interventions to support entry into further
- 8 education or training?
- 9 4.4 What are the barriers to, and facilitators for, supporting learning
- 10 needs?
- 11 5 Preparing children and young people for leaving care:
- 12 5.1 What is the effectiveness of interventions and approaches to support
- 13 young people transitioning out of care to living with their adoptive or birth
- 14 parents or special guardians, or into connected care?
- 15 5.2 What are the barriers to, and facilitators for, supporting and
- 16 developing young people to transition out of care to living with their
- 17 adoptive or birth parents or special guardians, or into connected care?
- 18 6 Preparing care leavers for independent living:
- 19 6.1 What is the effectiveness of interventions and approaches (including
- 20 entry into employment, training, life skills and higher education) to
- 21 support young people transitioning out of care into independent living?
- 22 6.2 What are the barriers to, and facilitators for, supporting and
- 23 developing care leavers to transition into independent living?

24 **3.6 Main outcomes**

25 The main outcomes that may be considered when searching for and

26 assessing the evidence are:

- 27 1 mental wellbeing and quality of life
- 28 2 behavioural, cognitive, educational and social functioning
- 29 3 quality of the relationship between child or young person and significant
- 30 people in their life, such as parent, caregiver and siblings
- 31 4 experience of parenting and parenting behaviour
- 32 5 social and economic independence

- 1 6 experience of interventions and care processes
- 2 7 knowledge and beliefs
- 3 8 criminal outcomes
- 4 9 health outcomes
- 5 10 re-entering care
- 6 11 homelessness rates
- 7 12 unintended consequences.

8 **4 NICE quality standards and NICE Pathways**

9 **4.1 NICE quality standards**

10 **NICE quality standards that may need to be revised or updated when** 11 **this guideline is published**

- 12 • Looked-after children and young people (2013) NICE quality standard
13 QS31

14 **4.2 NICE Pathways**

15 When this guideline is published, we will update the NICE Pathway on [looked-](#)
16 [after babies, children and young people](#), which brings together everything we
17 have said on this topic in an interactive flowchart.

18 **5 Further information**

This is the draft scope for consultation with registered stakeholders. The
consultation dates are 14 January to 11 February 2019.

The guideline is expected to be published in April 2021.

You can follow progress of the [guideline](#).

Our website has information about how [NICE guidelines](#) are developed.

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