

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND CARE EXCELLENCE

Guideline scope

Social, emotional and mental wellbeing in primary and secondary education

This guideline will update and replace NICE guidelines on [social and emotional wellbeing in primary education \(PH12\)](#) and [social and emotional wellbeing in secondary education \(PH20\)](#).

NICE worked with Public Health England to develop this scope.

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

1 Why the update is needed

New evidence that could affect the recommendations was identified through the surveillance process. NICE decided to combine the guidelines so that commonalities and differences between interventions for children and young people at different ages and life stages (for example at puberty) can be addressed. Full details are set out in the [surveillance review decision](#).

Social and emotional learning includes interrelated cognitive, communication, emotional and behavioural skills. These can be associated with better health and mental wellbeing outcomes and educational achievement.

Mental health is a dynamic state of mental wellbeing, in which a person is able to develop their potential, work productively and creatively, build strong and positive relationships with others and contribute to their community. It encompasses psychological, social and emotional wellbeing.

Primary and secondary schools help children and young people learn social and emotional skills through both the taught and wider curriculum (such as activities outside the classroom). Schools can provide the supportive, caring

and nurturing environment that supports positive social, emotional and mental wellbeing. They are also key settings in which to identify and provide early intervention for children and young people at increased risk of mental ill health.

Key facts and figures

General wellbeing

- In an average class of 30 15-year-old students: 10 are likely to have separated parents, 7 to have been bullied, 6 to be self-harming and 1 to have experienced the death of a parent ([Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing, Public Health England](#)).
- Adverse childhood experiences increase the risk of difficulties learning and engaging with others and poorer physical and mental health in later life.
- 18% of students aged 11 to 15 years report having experienced bullying online ([Cyberbullying: an analysis of data from the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children survey for England, 2014, Public Health England](#)). Being bullied is associated with lower achievement in both primary and secondary education.
- Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are at greater risk of bullying, exclusion, school absences and emotional difficulties.

Mental health

- Between 1999 and 2017 the prevalence of mental disorders in children and young people age 5 to 15 increased from 9.7% to 11.2%, and emotional disorders increased from 4.3% to 5.8% ([Mental health of children and young people in England, NHS Digital](#)).
- Around half of all mental health problems are established by the age of 14 ([The five year forward view for mental health, NHS England](#)).
- The number of referrals by schools in England seeking mental health treatment increased significantly between 2014 and 2018, with 56% coming from primary schools ([School referrals for mental health treatment rise by over a third, NSPCC](#)).

Current practice

Schools have statutory duties to establish environments where children and young people are supported and can fully engage. These duties encourage schools to support personal development, mental health and wellbeing.

Many schools follow a whole-school approach to social, emotional and mental wellbeing ([Supporting mental health in schools and colleges, Department for Education](#)). This approach goes beyond learning and teaching to include school culture, ethos and environment. It involves engaging with children and young people, their parents and carers, teacher and school leaders and outside agencies.

Social, emotional and mental wellbeing may be promoted in curriculum subjects such as personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and be embedded more broadly through a school's commitment to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) of their pupils.

Key challenges for schools include:

- knowing what approaches improve student outcomes in a specific school setting
- accommodating effective teaching of social, emotional and mental wellbeing in a crowded curriculum.

Schools also may not have the time or resources to assess the effectiveness of programmes they use or provide quality assurance of interventions.

Schools use various methods to identify children that may benefit from targeted interventions to support their approach to social, emotional and mental wellbeing. This may include information from other professionals such as a speech and language therapist or SEND coordinator.

Policy, legislation, regulation and commissioning

- This guideline will complement legislation such as the Department for Education's [Keeping children safe in education](#) and [Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school](#), and their guidance on [Preventing and tackling](#)

[bullying](#), [Mental health and behaviour in schools](#) and [Relationships education, relationships and sex education \(RSE\) and health education](#).

- The government is incentivising and supporting all schools and colleges to identify and train a designated senior lead for mental health who will oversee implementation of a whole-school approach (see [Transforming children and young people's mental health provision: a green paper](#) and the [government response to the public consultation on this paper](#)).
- Mental health support teams are being rolled out targeting support for school age children experiencing low to medium level mental health problems ([Children and young people's mental health – policy, services, funding and education, House of Commons Library](#)).
- The [Ofsted Education inspection framework](#) has been updated since the previous NICE guidelines were published. Ofsted has also proposed a new judgement on personal development, behaviour and attitudes and schools' leadership and management.

2 Who the guideline is for

This guideline is for:

- teachers, school support staff and others working in schools with – or responsible for – children and young people
- school leadership teams, including governors and leadership teams of multi-academy trusts
- practitioners with a health or social care remit (including public health, mental health and social workers) working in the NHS or local authorities
- commissioners and providers of interventions and services for child social, emotional and mental wellbeing
- the wider public, private, voluntary and community sectors working with children and young people.

It may also be relevant for:

- children, young people, and their parents and carers
- researchers and policy makers

- people providing or receiving home schooling
- organisations with a responsibility for inspection.

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

Equality considerations

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

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

3 What the guideline will cover

3.1 Who is the focus?

Groups that will be covered

Children and young people in primary or secondary education, key stages 1 to 5, and people with SEND up to and including 25 years old in further education colleges.

Specific consideration will be given to:

- Children and young people who have been absent from school for extended or regular periods of time, for example those with a long-term condition.
- Children and young people who have been excluded from school on a temporary or permanent basis.
- Where evidence allows, groups of children and young people vulnerable to poorer outcomes, such as those listed in the equality impact assessment.

Groups that will not be covered

- Children receiving early years foundation stage (EYFS) educational curriculum (typically children aged 4 to 5).

- Young people not in education.
- Young people with SEND in higher education.

3.2 Settings

Settings that will be covered

- Schools providing primary and secondary education including maintained schools, schools with a sixth form, academies, free schools, independent schools, non-maintained schools, and alternative provision including pupil referral units (see [Department for Education's Types of school](#)).
- Special schools.
- Further education colleges for young people, generally between the ages of 16 and 18.
- Young offender institutions.
- Secure children's homes.
- Secure training centres.
- Secure schools.

Settings that will not be covered

- Higher education institutions such as universities.
- Private homes.

3.3 Activities, services or aspects of care

Key areas that will be covered

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

Whole-school approaches

- 1 The whole-school approach is an integrated approach that includes and goes beyond teaching and learning in the classroom to all aspects of the life of a school including culture, ethos and environment, as well as partnerships with parents or carers and families, outside agencies, and the wider community (see [Public Health England's Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing](#)).

- 2 Identifying vulnerable children and young people as part of the whole-school approach.

Universal approaches

- 3 Curriculum content and classroom-based interventions focused on social, emotional and mental wellbeing. This includes lessons on resilience, self-esteem, coping skills (such as dealing with bereavement or adverse childhood events), mental health awareness, managing social relationships (to avoid bullying, including online bullying) and the appropriate and safe use of the internet and social media.

Targeted approaches

- 4 Targeted social or emotional support such as individual or small group interventions for areas such as self-esteem, resilience or coping skills for children and young people who need extra support in developing social and emotional skills.
- 5 Targeted mental health support such as individual or small group interventions for children and young people at risk of depression, anxiety or stress.

Transition

- 6 Support during periods of transition (for example developmental transitions such as puberty, life transitions such as family break-ups or bereavement, and educational transitions such as moving from primary to secondary school).

Areas that will not be covered

- 1 Interventions aimed at treating depression, anxiety or other mental health diagnoses.
- 2 Management of disruptive or violent behaviour.
- 3 Strategies focused on preventing self-harm or suicide. These are covered in the NICE guidelines on [preventing suicide](#), [self-harm in over 8s](#) and [self-harm: short-term management and secondary prevention in primary and secondary care](#).

Related NICE guidance

Published

- [Depression in children and young people: identification and management in primary, community and secondary care](#) (2019) NICE guideline NG134
- [Preventing suicide in community and custodial settings](#) (2018) NICE guideline NG105
- [Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: diagnosis and management](#) (2018) NICE guideline NG87
- [Challenging behaviour and learning disabilities: prevention and interventions for people with learning disabilities whose behaviour challenges](#) (2015) NICE guideline NG11
- [Social and emotional wellbeing: early years](#) (2014) NICE guideline PH40
- [Looked-after children and young people](#). (2015) NICE guidance PH28
- [Antisocial behaviour and conduct disorders in children and young people: recognition and management](#) (2013) NICE guideline CG158
- [Psychosis and schizophrenia in children and young people: recognition and management](#) (2013) NICE guideline CG155
- [Social anxiety disorder: recognition, assessment and treatment](#) (2013) NICE guideline CG159
- [Self-harm in over 8s: long-term management](#). (2011) NICE guideline CG133

In development

- [Alcohol interventions in secondary and further education](#). Publication expected August 2019
- [Children and young people with disabilities and severe complex needs: integrated health and social care support and service guidance](#). Publication expected February 2021
- [Looked after children and young people](#). Publication expected April 2021

NICE guidance that will be updated by this guideline

- [Social and emotional wellbeing in secondary education](#) (2009) NICE public health guideline PH20

- [Social and emotional wellbeing in primary education](#) (2008) NICE public health guideline PH12

3.4 Economic aspects

We will take economic aspects into account when making recommendations. We will develop an economic plan that states for each review question (or key area in the scope) whether economic considerations are relevant, and if so whether this is an area that should be prioritised for economic modelling and analysis. We will review the economic evidence and carry out economic analyses, using NHS and personal social services (PPS), public sector and local authority perspective, as appropriate.

3.5 Key issues and draft questions

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

- 1 Whole-school approach:
 - 1.1 What principles or combination of principles of the whole-school approaches to promote social, emotional and wellbeing in children and young people in primary and secondary education, and young people with SEND in further education, are effective and cost-effective?
 - 1.2 What are children and young people's experiences of the whole-school approach in promoting social, emotional and mental wellbeing?
 - 1.3 What are the barriers and facilitators to using the whole-school approach to promote social, emotional and mental wellbeing in children and young people?
- 2 Identifying vulnerable children and young people as part of the whole-school approach:
 - 2.1 What are the risk factors associated with poor social, emotional and mental wellbeing?

- 2.2 What are the barriers and facilitators to identifying children and young people at risk of poor social, emotional and mental wellbeing?
- 2.3 What is the usefulness of assessment tools to identify children and young people with poor social, emotional and mental wellbeing?
- 3 Universal classroom-based interventions:
 - 3.1 What universal classroom-based interventions to promote social, emotional and mental wellbeing in children and young people in primary and secondary education, and young people with SEND in further education, are effective and cost effective?
 - 3.2 Are universal classroom-based interventions acceptable to the children and young people receiving them and to those delivering them?
 - 3.3 What are the barriers and facilitators to using universal classroom-based interventions to promote social, emotional and mental wellbeing in children and young people?
- 4 Targeted social or emotional support
 - 4.1 What targeted approaches to promote social, emotional and mental wellbeing in children and young people in primary and secondary education, and young people with SEND in further education, are effective and cost effective?
 - 4.2 Are targeted approaches to promote social, emotional and mental wellbeing acceptable to those receiving them and to those delivering them?
 - 4.3 What are the barriers and facilitators to using targeted approaches to promote social, emotional and mental wellbeing in children and young people?
- 5 Targeted mental health support:
 - 5.1 What targeted mental health support approaches for children and young people in primary and secondary education, and young people with SEND in further education, are effective and cost effective?

- 5.2 Are targeted mental health support approaches acceptable to the children and young people receiving them and to those delivering them?
- 5.3 What are the barriers and facilitators to using targeted mental health support?
- 6 Support during periods of transition:
 - 6.1 What are effective and cost-effective interventions to support the emotional and social wellbeing of children during periods of transition (such as between schools, life stages or due to traumatic events)?
 - 6.2 Are interventions to support the emotional and social wellbeing of children and young people during periods of transition (such as between schools, life stages or due to traumatic events) acceptable to children and young people?
 - 6.3 What are the barriers and facilitators to supporting the emotional and social wellbeing of children and young people during periods of transition?

The key issues and draft questions will be used to develop more detailed review questions, which guide the systematic review of the literature.

3.6 Main outcomes

The main outcomes that may be considered when searching for and assessing the evidence for interventions are:

- Social, emotional and mental wellbeing outcomes (subjective or objective) such as:
 - communication skills
 - confidence or self-esteem
 - planning and problem-solving skills
 - relationships skills, cooperating with others and negotiating conflict
 - resilience and determination
 - managing feelings
 - engagement, belonging or connectedness.
- School-related and academic outcomes such as:

- educational attainment (for example reading, maths and science)
- absenteeism
- exclusion
- school environment.
- Other outcomes:
 - quality of life
 - unintended consequences
 - economic outcomes.
- Acceptability of interventions:
 - satisfaction
 - adherence.
- Barriers and facilitators of interventions:
 - physical environment (including time)
 - staffing (including staff numbers, training and skills)
 - attitudes (such as those of teachers, parents, carers and pupils).

The main outcomes that may be considered when searching for and assessing the evidence for risk factors are:

- Identification of vulnerable children and young people:
 - individual factors
 - familial factors
 - school factors
 - peer factors.

4 NICE quality standards and NICE Pathways

4.1 NICE quality standards

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

- [School based interventions](#). Publication date to be confirmed.

4.2 *NICE Pathways*

When this guideline is published, we will update the NICE Pathway on social and emotional wellbeing for children and young people, which brings together everything we have said on [social and emotional wellbeing for children and young people](#) in an interactive flowchart.

5 Further information

This is the final scope, which takes into account comments from registered stakeholders during consultation.

The guideline is expected to be published in August 2021.

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

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

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