Publication withdrawn

This guidance is out of date and was withdrawn in August 2025.

Evidence based public health nursing and midwifery

A summary of NICE guidance to underpin practice

Public Health Outcome Domain One – Improving the wider determinants of health

Evidence based public health nursing and midwifery

A summary of NICE guidance to underpin nursing and midwifery practice to improve population health and wellbeing

The challenges we face in terms of population health and well-being are huge. We know the impact of lifestyle factors on health, we understand increasingly the 'causes of the causes' and we are learning more about how to support people to make decisions and choices which are positive for their health. We need to now practice in ways which use this knowledge and our nursing and midwifery skills to make a personal and professional impact to improve health and well-being.

Why use evidence based practice?

Best practice, value for money, high quality care

About this summary guide

Nurses and midwives have told us that they are they are keen to increase their range and reach in improving health and wellbeing and to do so need to have access to the evidence of what works.

This is a professional nursing and midwifery practice summary guide based on original work by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidance on public health. Information about NICE work on public health is shown on page 12.

We have worked with NICE to review and summarise the relevant guidance to support nurses and midwives in delivering evidence based interventions to improve health. This guide sets out this work for Public Health Outcome Domain One – Improving the wider determinants of health.

Over the coming months we will work with the professions to develop the evidence base including web interface to access this summary guidance and support learning and development for 'health promoting practice'.

What is evidence?

Evidence is one part of a process in demonstrating that interventions have been robustly tested and therefore that public health practice is supported by research or tested pathways.

A discussion of use of evidence for practice and validated sources of evidence is set out in our publication "The evidence base of the public health contribution of nurses and midwives".

Public Health Outcome Domain One – Improving the wider determinants of health

This document shows the summarised NICE guidance for improvements against wider factors that affect health and wellbeing, and health inequalities. It includes:

Smoking prevention

PH14 Preventing the uptake of smoking by children and young people

PH23 School based interventions to prevent smoking

Social and emotional wellbeing in children

PH40 Social and emotional wellbeing – early years

PH12 Social and emotional wellbeing in primary education

PH20 Social and emotional wellbeing in secondary education

Unintentional injuries in the under-15 age group

PH29 Strategies to prevent unintentional injuries among under-15's

PH30 Preventing unintentional injuries among under-15's in the home

PH31 Preventing unintentional road injuries among under-15's: road design

Work based interventions

PH19 Management of long-term sickness and incapacity for work

PH 22 Promoting mental wellbeing at work

Miscellaneous

PH6 Behaviour change

PH8 Physical activity and the environment

PH9 Community engagement

PH28 Looked after children and young people

Improving the wider determinants of health through smoking prevention strategies

Relevance

Whilst NICE guidance aimed at smoking prevention is mainly aimed at local and regional commissioners and planners of services, nursing groups of practice nursing, school nursing and health visiting have a role to play.

Summary of recommendations related to public health nursing and midwifery

- There are opportunities for partnership working at a local level through smoking prevention interventions including point of sale interventions and at community and population levels through mass media campaigns. Mass-media interventions use a range of traditional methods and new social media to communicate smoking prevention messages
- Messages based on strategic research and qualitative pre- and post-testing with the target audiences for example empower children and young people to refuse offers of cigarettes. This should include graphic images portraying smoking's detrimental effect on health as well as appearance of skin and teeth to reduce the attractiveness of tobacco and contribute to changing society's attitude towards tobacco use, so that smoking is not considered the norm by any group
- The recommendations on prevention strategy clearly demonstrate how by reducing the attractiveness of smoking, young people can be encouraged to make healthy choices not to smoke
- Nurses and midwives can contribute to the prevention strategy by relaying consistent anti- smoking messages and be aware of the role modelling

Guidance relevant to this summary:

PH14 Preventing the uptake of smoking by children and young people

PH23 School based interventions to prevent smoking

Improving the wider determinants of health through social and emotional wellbeing in children

NICE guidance related to the social and emotional wellbeing in children covers the continuum of early years, primary and secondary education years.

Relevance

The guidance is relevant to mental health nursing, nurses in primary care settings, paediatric nurses across all age groups, midwives and health visitors in the early years programme and school nurses during school years.

Implications for leadership and practice

- Leadership for early years home-visiting and support programmes, health visitors leading early intervention and support in the early years

- Partnership working and health promotion opportunities relevant across professional and organisational boundaries
- Leadership responsibility for ensuring appropriate training and education of practitioners to support recommendations

Summary of recommendations

- Early identification at each age group of vulnerable children at risk of social, emotional and behavioural problems together with targeted, evidence-based and structured interventions through intensive and targeted programmes across all settings should be monitored against outcomes
- Partnership working with families by universal and targeted services should focus on the child's needs and taking into account the strengths and capabilities of parents as well as factors which pose a risk to social and emotional development
- In educational settings a comprehensive, 'whole school' approach to children's social and emotional wellbeing should be adopted
- Partnership working between health and education should support a 'stepped care' approach to preventing and managing mental health problems in school age children
- Ensure practitioners have the knowledge, understanding and skills they need to develop children's and young people's social and emotional wellbeing through provision of relevant and effective training programmes

Guidance relevant to this summary

PH40 Social and emotional wellbeing – early years

PH12 Social and emotional wellbeing in primary education

PH20 Social and emotional wellbeing in secondary education

Improving the wider determinant of health through the prevention of unintentional injuries in the under-15 age group

NICE guidance relevant to the prevention of unintentional injuries in the under-15 age groups covers strategies relating to both the community and home settings.

Relevance

This guidance is relevant to all nursing professional groups in contact with children and their parents, particularly specialist public health nurses, school nurses and health visitors.

Implications for leadership and practice

- Discreet leadership opportunities for accident prevention
- Health promotion opportunities regarding safety issues within and outside the home by ensuring that those visiting families should have the knowledge and skills to assess the risk of unintentional injuries and provide preventative action and advice

Summary of recommendations

- Key issues around water safety include identifying increased risk factors, age related factors, seasonal factors, lack of swimming skills
- Cycle and road safety issues and role modelling by adults
- Home safety: identification and targeted advice to at risk families through home visiting and ED attendance monitoring

Guidance relevant to this summary

PH29 Strategies to prevent unintentional injuries among under 15's

PH30 Preventing unintentional injuries among under 15's in the home

PH31 Preventing unintentional road injuries among under 15's: road design

Improving the wider determinants of health through workplace interventions

NICE guidance relevant to workplace interventions covers the management of long term conditions and promotion of mental wellbeing.

Relevance

This guidance is relevant to occupational health nursing, practice nursing and all nurses who are themselves employers.

Implications for leadership and practice

- Related to organisational culture no specific nursing implications as relevant to all employing organisations
- Potential development of "case worker" role as health promotion opportunity

Summary of recommendations

- Consider CBT or education and training on physical and mental coping strategies for work and everyday activities (this may be combined with exercise programmes) opportunity for health promotion and partnership working
- Adopt an organisation-wide approach to promoting the physical and mental wellbeing of all employees, working in partnership with them through open communication and inclusion
- Ensure processes for job design, selection, recruitment, training, development and appraisal promote physical and mental wellbeing and reduce the potential for stigma and discrimination
- Using frameworks such as Health and Safety Executive management standards for work-related stress to promote and protect employee mental wellbeing

Guidance relevant to this summary

PH19 Management of long-term sickness and incapacity for work

PH 22 Promoting mental wellbeing at work

Improving the wider determinants of health through behaviour change

This NICE guidance identifies the key issues for success in influencing individual decision making in the promotion of behaviour change to improve health and wellbeing.

Relevance

This guidance is relevant to all nursing groups whose work impacts on, or who wish to change, people's health-related behaviour, particularly practice nursing and health visitors.

Implications for leadership and practice

- Partnership working opportunities with individuals, communities, organisations and populations to plan interventions and programmes to change health-related behaviour
- Leadership responsibility to ensure provision of training and support for those involved in changing people's health-related behaviour so that they can develop the full range of competencies required

Summary of recommendations

- Interventions and programmes aimed at changing behaviour should take into account the local and national context and working in partnership with recipients
- Interventions and programmes should be based on a sound knowledge of community needs and should build upon the existing skills and resources within a community
- Regulatory bodies should consider developing standards for these competencies and skills. The standards should take into account the different roles and responsibilities of practitioners working both within and outside the NHS
- Ensure fair and equitable access to education and training, to enable practitioners and volunteers who help people to change their health-related behaviour to develop their skills and competencies

Guidance relevant to this summary

PH6 Behaviour change

Improving the wider determinants of health through physical activity and the environment

The guidance is for NHS and other professionals who have a direct or indirect role in – and responsibility for – the built or natural environment. This includes those working in local authorities and the education, community, voluntary and private sectors. It may also be of interest to members of the public.

Relevance

This guidance is not relevant to nursing groups.

Leadership and practice implications

None

Summary of recommendations

No public health nursing recommendations arise from this guidance

Guidance relevant to this summary

PH8 Physical activity and the environment

Improving the wider determinants of health through community engagement

Relevance

This guidance is relevant to all nurses and midwives leading community engagement activities

Leadership and practice implications

- Actively engaging with and working in partnership with local communities to improve health outcomes for all
- Recognising the need to meaningfully engage with communities and actively involving community members in health promotion and change initiatives

Summary of recommendations

- Understand the gradual, incremental and long-term nature of community engagement activities. Ensure mechanisms are in place to evaluate and learn from these processes on a continuing, systematic basis
- Identify how to fund community engagement activities and identify lines of accountability
- Recognise that a short-term focus on activities and area-based initiatives can undermine efforts to secure long-term and effective community participation
- Agree and be clear about how community engagement can influence decision-making and/or lead to improved services. Anticipate the degree of impact it can have on the wider social determinants of health and health inequalities
- Consider impact of organisational and cultural change
- Identify and recognise local diversity and local priorities with regards to levels of engagement and power
- Learn from and build on previous or existing activities and local people's experiences to engage them to secure mutual trust and respect
- Develop statements of partnership working for all those involved in health promotion or activities to address the wider social determinants of health

Guidance relevant to this summary

PH9 Community engagement

Improving the wider determinants of health for looked after children and young people

Relevance

This guidance is relevant to all nurses in contact with looked after children and young people in particular CAMHS Professionals, SCPHN Health visitors and school nurses, designated and named nurses within safeguarding.

Leadership and practice implications

- Provision of strong and visible leadership focusing on the needs of looked after children and young people

- Promote and meet the needs and access to services of children from black and minority ethnic groups and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people

- Ensure appropriate information sharing protocols are in place

- Ensure that there is access to health services for foster carers

- Focus on effective partnership and multi-agency working across all aspects of healthcare provision

- Address inequalities for looked-after children and young people

- Provision of services which meet the physical and emotional well-being of looked after babies, children and young people including specialist support

- Provision of Services that are culturally sensitive to the impact of values, beliefs and culture in order to ensure that children achieve their life potential

- Ensure a seamless and smooth transition from child to adult services leaving care

Summary of recommendations

- Consideration of cultural and diversity issues across all aspects of the care of looked after children and young people is paramount

- Ensure specialist education and training provision for all practitioners

- Ensure the provision of services which meet the physical, mental and emotional well-being of looked after babies, children and young people children including specialist support

Guidance relevant to this summary

PH28 Looked after children and young people

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE)

NICE's role is to improve outcomes for people using the NHS and other public health and social care services by:

- Producing evidence-based guidance and advice for health, public health and social care practitioners
- Developing quality standards and performance metrics for those providing and commissioning health, public health and social care services
- Providing a range of information services for commissioners, practitioners and managers across the spectrum of health and social care

Public Health Guidance

Public health guidance makes recommendations for populations and individuals on activities, policies and strategies that can help prevent disease or improve health. The guidance may focus on a particular topic (such as smoking), a particular population (such as schoolchildren) or a particular setting (such as the workplace). The NICE website www.nice.org.uk includes the following information:

- Update on public health topics in development
- Published public health guidance
- Public health guidance in development
- How we develop NICE public health guidance
- Healthcare-associated infections quality improvement guide
- Full list of NICE guidance that makes public health recommendations.