

MEDIA RELEASE

NATIONAL PROGRAMME HELPS YOUNG PEOPLE DEVELOP LIFE SKILLS

A national programme to help young people develop essential life skills will be relaunched today (**Tuesday 14 March**) at a major conference in London.

Life Routes, which is managed by the National Children's Bureau (NCB), is funded by Nokia as part of the global Make a Connection programme committed to promoting positive youth development.

The *Life Routes* programme works in schools and communities to help young people develop the skills and confidence they need to achieve the five outcomes for children laid out in the government's Every Child Matters strategy. It focuses on key life skills: self-confidence and a sense of responsibility; problem solving and communication; team work and respect for others.

The conference will mark the launch of a new *Life Routes* resource for those working with vulnerable young people in a range of settings. It offers practical ideas for working with 13 to 16-year-olds to help them develop the skills essential for living and achieving in today's society.

"All young people need to learn skills to help them negotiate and manage everyday challenges," explained Sophie Wood, project manager at NCB. "This is especially true for vulnerable young people, including those with behavioural or emotional difficulties and those who have experienced traumatic events in their lives and are less resilient as a result.

"By encouraging young people to develop life skills, we help them to resist negative influences and have the confidence to make informed choices. These skills can have a major influence on their long-term outcomes."

Mark Squires, head of communications at Nokia UK, added: "In the high pressure world we live in, we can sometimes overlook the need for young people to be given

the self-confidence and life skills to face the day-to-day physical and emotional pressures that are a normal part of growing up. *Life Routes* is about helping them to maximise their potential and connect in richer ways with others.”

The *Life Routes* resource builds on the success of the Make a Connection schools programme, also funded by Nokia and managed by NCB, which benefited more than 27,000 pupils, with over 1000 teachers trained to deliver activities. Prior to the launch, pilot *Life Routes* programmes were run in five community areas – Blackpool, Croydon, Hackney, Gateshead and Lincoln – with positive feedback from young people and youth workers.

One 16-year-old involved in the Hackney project said: “Through Life Routes we were able to look at some of the pressures in life, how you don’t have to do what everyone tells you or expects you to do. You can be resilient, it is really important to do what you want to do. It is not always easy to make the right choice but I certainly feel more confident in trying to get it right.”

This positive view was endorsed by Lorraine King, PSHE coordinator at Francis Barber Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), in her foreword to the resource. “The explicit teaching of life skills is essential in a PRU as it empowers young people, making them more self-aware and reflective,” she said.

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Notes for editors:

- 1) Life Routes is a project to promote the learning of life skills in schools and community settings. The project is managed by the National Children’s Bureau and funded by Nokia.
- 2) Life Routes aims to help young people achieve the five national outcomes outlined in the government’s Every Child Matters strategy. These are to: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, achieve economic well-being.

- 3) Nokia funds Life Routes in the UK as part of the global Make A Connection programme. The programme aims to help young people learn and apply personal, social and academic skills to real life through practice in working with others, making decisions, exercising good judgement, solving problems and setting and achieving goals.
- 4) NCB promotes the voices, interests and well-being of all children and young people across every aspect of their lives. As an umbrella body for the children's sector in England and Northern Ireland, we provide essential information on policy, research and best practice for our members and other partners. For more information visit www.ncb.org.uk
- 5) Nokia is a Gold member of NCB's Corporate Partner Programme. For more information about how NCB works in partnership with the business community email corporatepartner@ncb.org.uk