UNderstanding uptake of Immunisations in TravellIng aNd Gypsy communities (UNITING): a qualitative interview study


Record Status
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Citation

Authors' objectives
Gypsies, Travellers and Roma (referred to as Travellers) are less likely to access health services, including immunisation. To improve immunisation rates, we need to understand what helps and hinders individuals in these communities in taking up immunisations. (1) Investigate the barriers to and facilitators of acceptability and uptake of immunisations among six Traveller communities across four UK cities; and (2) identify possible interventions to increase uptake of immunisations in these Traveller communities that could be tested in a subsequent feasibility study.

Authors' conclusions
There were many common accounts of barriers and facilitators across communities, particularly across the English-speaking communities. Scottish Showpeople were the most similar to the general population. Roma communities experienced additional barriers of language and being in a new country. Men, women and service providers described similar barriers and facilitators. There was widespread acceptance of childhood and adult immunisation, with current parents perceived as more positive than their elders. A minority of English-speaking Travellers worried about multiple/combined childhood vaccines, adult flu and whooping cough. Cultural concerns about vaccines offered during pregnancy and about human papillomavirus were most evident in the Bristol English Gypsy/Irish Traveller community. Language, literacy, discrimination, poor school attendance, poverty and housing were identified by Travellers and service providers as barriers for some. Trustful relationships with health professionals were important and continuity of care was valued. A few English-speaking Travellers described problems of booking and attending for immunisation. Service providers tailored their approach to Travellers, particularly the Roma. Funding cuts, NHS reforms and poor monitoring challenged their work. Five ‘top-priority’ interventions were agreed across communities and service providers to improve the immunisation among Travellers who are housed or settled on an authorised site: (1) cultural competence training for health professionals and frontline staff; (2) identification of Travellers in health records to tailor support and monitor uptake; (3) provision of a named frontline person in general practitioner practices to provide respectful and supportive service; (4) flexible and diverse systems for booking appointments, recall and reminders; and (5) protected funding for health visitors specialising in Traveller health, including immunisation

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