



Tailoring Immunisation Programmes: Charedi Community, London Borough of Hackney

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Charedi Community



What we did

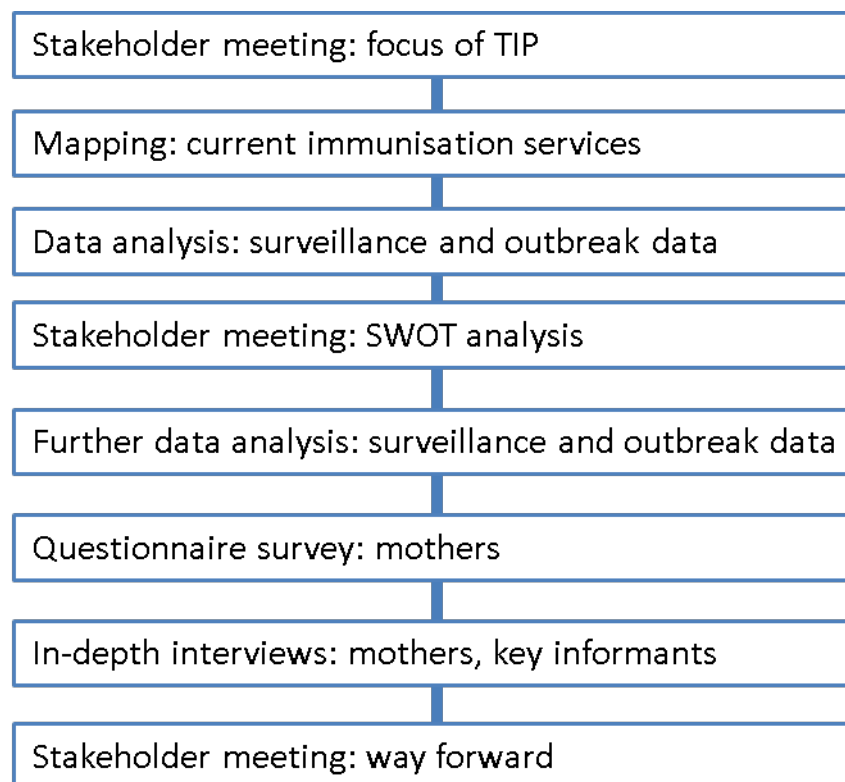


Fig. 1: The steps of the TIP process in the North East London Charedi community

Data analysis confirmed that:

- uptake of immunisations was lower within the Charedi community.
- recurring vaccine preventable diseases were placing a burden on the community particularly in children under 4years of age who should be protected by the routine childhood vaccination schedule.
- General practice services were potentially under pressure to provide immunisation services due to the high number of children in the community

What did the survey highlight?

- reducing waiting times and increasing child-friendly facilities are important.
- children's centres are popular as additional immunisation venues
- community specific initiatives such as Sunday clinics and Charedi nurse immunisers are also popular
- there are un-met Information needs within the community

Parent and key informant interviews: What might improve vaccination uptake or the service?

- More information or less biased information
 - Up to date leaflets, magnets, wall calendars
 - Email when vaccine is due
 - Informal session / workshop at children's centres
 - Post immunisation helpline
 - Someone from same culture
 - Religious guidance
- Improved access
 - Walk in clinic (or easy to book)
 - Close by (or home visits)
 - Out of hours
 - Short wait time
 - Comfortable and pleasant surroundings with space for buggies (children's centres)
 - School immunisations



Key messages

- No evidence of cultural or religious objection to immunisation
- Beliefs about immunisation within the community are broadly similar to the wider population
- Resolving service access issues should be prioritised to improve uptake
- Improved recording of community membership in health records would help monitor uptake and target tailored interventions
- Collaborating with community members including charities, community and religious leaders invaluable
- Community specific interventions should be evaluated for effectiveness

Measures implemented

- Practices agreed to send proactive reminder by text and follow-up phone call.
- All children to be flagged on EMIS Web in-case the parent arrives for another appointment. Every opportunity used to remind the parent will be recorded.
- If a child attends, all possible vaccines will be given that fall within the UK schedule,
- Monthly data on vaccination activity to be sent to NHS England.
- Reminders and an alternative appointment to be offered to non-attenders.
- The relevant practices to have a representative on the Hackney Immunisation Group.
- Practice payment process altered to recognise special circumstances
- Local authority and immunisation providers exploring options for using community venues for immunisation clinics

CHAREDI HEALTH

Low immunisation rates in some strictly Orthodox communities mean the vulnerable are falling prey to preventable diseases

BY LIANNE KOLIRIN

► CHAREDI CHILDREN in Stamford Hill are at risk of contracting potentially deadly conditions like measles — and the community is in danger of being affected by an epidemic — because too many parents are not getting them immunised.

The issue also affects the country's fastest-growing Charedi community in Prestwich, Manchester.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has held discussions with communal leaders from the north-east London suburb, home to Europe's largest strictly Orthodox community, because of "persistent outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases (VPDs)". The organisation has decided to

intervene via its Tailoring Immunisation Programme (TIP), which was designed to identify susceptible populations.

Low uptake levels threaten to "jeopardise disease elimination", according to WHO, which is why medical experts are working with community leaders — many of whom are calling for action now.

Chief among those is Stamford Hill GP, Dr Joseph Spitzer, himself an Orthodox Jew. More than 80 per cent of his patients in Cranwich Road Surgery are Charedi.

"Parents who don't immunise their children are totally irresponsible, for their own children and other people's," he said.

For diseases to be wiped out, communities must have "herd immunity", whereby well above 90 per cent of people are immunised. When that is not

reached, as in Stamford Hill, where the percentage is well below 80 per cent, there is the risk of an epidemic, particularly among the elderly, young children and pregnant women.

Evidence provided by City and Hackney Public Health Team revealed that uptake of the 5-in-1 vaccine (combating diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio and Hib), which should be delivered in early infancy, was around 30 per cent lower in concentrated Charedi areas than in the rest of the borough of Hackney. In Stamford Hill, the uptake in 2015-16 was 64 per cent, compared with 90 to 95 per cent elsewhere in the borough.

Rates for the MMR vaccination in the same area for the same period were 76 per cent, while the uptake across Hackney was 85 to 89 per cent. This is significantly better than previously, but is "slowly and steadily declining", a council spokeswoman said.

When Rachel Fein's daughter was four months old, she contracted measles at the creche at Yesodey Hatorah Senior Girls School, where Mrs Fein is deputy head.

"She was too young to have the MMR so when she was exposed to measles she developed it with complications," said Mrs Fein. "Thankfully there were no long-term effects, but she was admitted to hospital with a high fever, lethargy, a rash and dehydration."

Dr Joseph Spitzer

Children are no longer accepted in the creche without vaccinations, unless there are specific medical reasons.

Dr Spitzer said that reasons for the drop in vaccination rates are "hard to define".

"A lot is based on ignorance and myth. Parents aren't desperately well informed because they don't follow secular media," he explained. "Sometimes they say the rebbe told them not to immunise, but when I speak to the rebbes they vehemently deny it. There's a certain laissez-faire attitude due to people no longer knowing what these diseases are. Immunisation is a victim of its own success."

Babies should be vaccinated from eight weeks onwards, but that advice often falls on deaf ears.

"Occasionally we have outbreaks of measles, rubella and mumps which are entirely preventable," Dr Spitzer said.

The Cranwich Road Surgery is among three in the area to employ a Charedi nurse to boost take-up. Naomi Freeman was previously funded by Hackney Public Health to do just that across the borough and was highly successful. However, she was recently made redundant due to budget cuts.

"I got rates up from 54 to 87 per cent [within the community]," said Mrs Freeman, who was taken on by Dr Spitzer last month. At that time, immunisations at Cranwich Road were just 50 per cent.

"Health visitors would be told that Pesach is coming up and they can't immunise for six

"People don't take immunisation seriously because they've seen those illnesses and think 'it isn't that terrible'. They don't realise that it could kill somebody else. We have a responsibility to others as well as ourselves"

Rabbi Avraham Pinter

Children at risk as Charedi parents say no to vaccinations

weeks," Mrs Freeman added. "The health visitor took that at face value, but I say 'put your kugel in the oven and come to me.'"

Excuses for not seeking vaccinations are numerous, according to Mrs Freeman, who says the risk is heightened by overcrowding and the high proportion

partly due to enduring fears about MMR, sparked by former doctor Andrew Wakefield who was discredited over claims the vaccine caused autism. He said: "Some people say 'it's in God's hands and I'm not going to take that risk'. That view has no basis in Yiddishkeit."

The team

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Rabbi Pinter and Naomi Freeman - Charedi community

Full Report: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tailoring-immunisation-programmes-charedi-community-north-london>

Louise Letley, Katrine Bach Habersaat, Vanessa Rew, Rehana Ahmed, Maria Saavedra-Campos, Tracey Chantler, Pauline Paterson. Tailoring Immunisation Programmes: Barriers and motivators to childhood immunisations in a Charedi Orthodox Jewish community in London, UK. Vaccine 36 (2018) 4687–4692