

Promotion of childhood immunisation to travelling families

Introduction

In their document *Our priorities for 2013/14*, Public Health England (2013) list protecting the country from infectious diseases as one of their top five priorities. They set out to lead the way with existing vaccination and screening programmes, reverse the current increase in measles and support new vaccine programmes for rotavirus, childhood flu, pertussis in pregnancy and shingles.

Travellers are a minority group who have difficulty accessing healthcare services and low levels of immunisation uptake (Zeman et al., 2003; Patel, 2005; Lynch, 2006;).

With the right training and investment, health visitors are ideally placed to promote immunisation uptake to this community.

Evidence

Parry et al. (2004) describe the health inequalities between the traveller population in England and their settled counterparts as shocking, even when compared to other socially deprived or excluded groups.

Social policy, laws, social norms and media coverage all influence immunisation uptake. There are many similarities in the needs of the traveller and settled populations with regards to the promotion of immunisation, particularly with public loss of confidence in immunisation.

However, travellers are a vulnerable group who currently face practical, institutional and cultural barriers to immunisation and require additional and specialist health promotion.

Recommendations

- Specialist practitioner for travelling families
- Outreach teams with specialist training
- Additional standardised training for all healthcare workers on making services accessible to minority groups
- Changes to law and policy to make services more equitable
- Further community participatory research
- Consider a return to health visitors administering vaccines
- Maintenance of accurate records of child immunisation status
- Research to improve professional education and training in immunisation
- Advantage taken of opportunistic contacts with healthcare services to vaccinate or promote immunisation
- Targeting of immunisation promotion
- Diverse immunisation promotional materials presented in a range of contexts

References

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