

Leeds Community Vaccine Champion Programme: building trust and connecting with communities to tackle vaccine inequality

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Introduction

- Falling vaccination uptake in Leeds is driving increases in preventable diseases such as measles
- Significant inequalities exist: MMR uptake is around 50% lower in the most deprived areas
- Underserved communities face barriers including access, trust and misinformation

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Programme Overview

- Commissioned by NHS West Yorkshire ICB
- Delivered by Voluntary Action Leeds & Forum Central in partnership with Leeds City Council.
- Works to embed voluntary community champions and VCSE organisations at the heart of vaccination conversations
- Aims to improve awareness and understanding of the NHS vaccination programme across the life course

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Methodology

- Independent mixed-methods evaluation by Leeds Beckett University:
- Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders, champions and commissioners
 - Focus groups
 - Monitoring data analysis
 - Explored delivery, impact, and learning

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Key findings and impact

Key findings

- Increased vaccine awareness and knowledge
- Provided evidence of behaviour change intention
- Effective reach into underserved communities
- Allowed champions to tackle misinformation using trusted relationships
- Improved access to vaccination services
- Strengthened trust between communities and the health system
- Champions acted as a two-way bridge for insight sharing between communities and health care services

Impact

- Greater confidence in vaccination
- Reduced practical barriers to access
- Stronger relationships between communities and services
- Contribution to reducing health inequalities



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Transferability

This approach demonstrates:

- Community engagement & relationship-building
- Effective, culturally sensitive communication
- Addressing misinformation with empathy and evidence
- Co-production across sectors
- Use of community insight to inform services
- Advocacy for health equity

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Conclusion

Community-centred approaches are essential to:

- Improve vaccine uptake
- Build trust with underserved groups
- Reduce health inequalities

Champions programmes should not be delivered in isolation but rather be an embedded component of addressing low uptake. To maintain impact and build trust over time, long-term, sustainable funding is required to support ongoing engagement, capacity-building, and the continuity of trusted relationships within communities.

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