

Improving vaccination coverage in Skärholmen (Sweden) by bringing services closer to the community

In Skärholmen, a Stockholm district with a large migrant population, many seniors faced barriers such as difficulties with digital booking systems, limited mobility and language challenges. Administrative requirements and linguistic obstacles further discouraged participation, contributing to low influenza and COVID-19 vaccination rates among residents aged 65 and older.

To enhance accessibility, a mobile vaccination unit was set up in the central square of Skärholmen for seven consecutive Saturdays. This provided an easily accessible vaccination option and served as a convenient alternative to the standard digital booking system.

This pilot initiative, funded by the European Union through the 'Overcoming Obstacles to Vaccination' project, also placed strong emphasis on outreach to raise awareness. This included collaborations with local and national media, distributing postcards to residents in the target age group, and engaging with local stakeholders in elderly care services. To better serve the community, posters and flyers were also translated into multiple languages.

Bringing vaccination closer to residents through a mobile unit

The pilot was implemented through close collaboration between the Stockholm regional health authority, the Health and Medical Service Administration, and six local health centres. The mobile unit was staffed with a diverse team, including nurses to administer vaccines, healthcare professionals supporting non-Swedish speakers, and multilingual health informers trained in health and wellbeing. These informers actively engaged with residents, raising awareness and encouraging uptake of the mobile unit's services.

The initiative contributed to a 3% increase in influenza vaccination coverage among the target group in Skärholmen. Importantly, it also reached individuals who had not been vaccinated the previous year: 27% of those vaccinated for influenza and 46% of those vaccinated for COVID-19 through the mobile unit had not received the same vaccines in 2023.

The pilot fostered new collaborations among local stakeholders, both within and beyond the Stockholm region. It strengthened partnerships between primary healthcare providers facing similar challenges and built closer cooperation between the health authority, municipal social workers, and elderly care services.

For the health authority, the initiative provided valuable insights into integrating stakeholders with diverse expertise into vaccination services. It also underscored the importance of effective community engagement and helped identify key partners for future outreach efforts.

Overcoming Obstacles to Vaccination across the EU

"Overcoming Obstacles to Vaccination" is a three-year EU-funded project that aims to boost vaccination coverage by tackling physical, practical, and administrative barriers to seven key vaccines, including COVID-19, HPV (Human Papillomavirus), and MMR (Measles, Mumps, and Rubella). The project identified effective practices across EU Member States, piloted them in countries facing similar challenges, and developed tailored recommendations for policymakers, health authorities, professionals, and citizens.