Overcoming Obstacles to Vaccination

Funded by the European Union

# Increasing vaccination uptake with accessible local sites

**Declining vaccination rates among nine- and ten-year-olds in New West Amsterdam have underscored the need for a targeted solution, as this area records some of the lowest coverage in the region, particularly for HPV, MMR, and DTP (Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis) vaccines. Many families face practical barriers that make vaccination challenging, including long travel distances, limited time due to work commitments, and unfamiliar vaccination locations.**

To support families in this area and reduce barriers to vaccination, local health authorities launched a pilot initiative funded by the European Union through the 'Overcoming Obstacles to Vaccination' project to relocate vaccination sites. The vaccination setting was moved from a large sports hall to a smaller, more accessible room in a building adjacent to a local school. This change aimed to reduce travel and accessibility barriers while avoiding the sensitivities associated with in-school vaccination. The new location offered a quieter, more comfortable environment for families and was already used for youth healthcare, meaning no additional staff or equipment were required. Standard procedures remained unchanged, and families received personalised invitation letters with the updated location.

This initiative was made possible through collaboration with key partners, including the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) and the Municipal Health Service of Amsterdam (GGD Amsterdam). RIVM coordinates the National Immunisation Programme, while GGD Amsterdam implements national vaccination policies at the local level.

## *Improving access through thoughtful relocation*

The pilot ran from spring to autumn 2024, and its impact was assessed by comparing vaccination results from 2023 (before relocation) and 2024 (after relocation). During this period, the regular vaccination site recorded the largest improvement in vaccination uptake, supported by ongoing outreach campaigns. The pilot sites kept about the same participation levels, even though the change of location was not promoted or publicised. Importantly, vaccination rates at the pilot sites did not decrease following the relocation. In fact, during the autumn catch-up round, MMR coverage rose by 13% at one pilot site and 10% at the other, while DTP increased by up to 19%. Parents responded very positively to the new setup: 84% said they preferred the small, school-adjacent site over the large sports hall, and three in four indicated they might not have attended if vaccination had been offered elsewhere.

The Dutch pilot confirmed that proximity matters. Even without added outreach, families used the nearby service. It's important to mention that the in-depth visit to Spain and exchanges with other EU countries helped shape the pilot's design.

The pilot results demonstrate that small, practical changes like relocating vaccination sites to more convenient locations can be adapted and scaled to other regions. By using existing infrastructure and keeping vaccinations outside schools, this approach offers a flexible, affordable way to bring

vaccines closer to families, with early school engagement ensuring smooth implementation and broader national impact.

## *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.