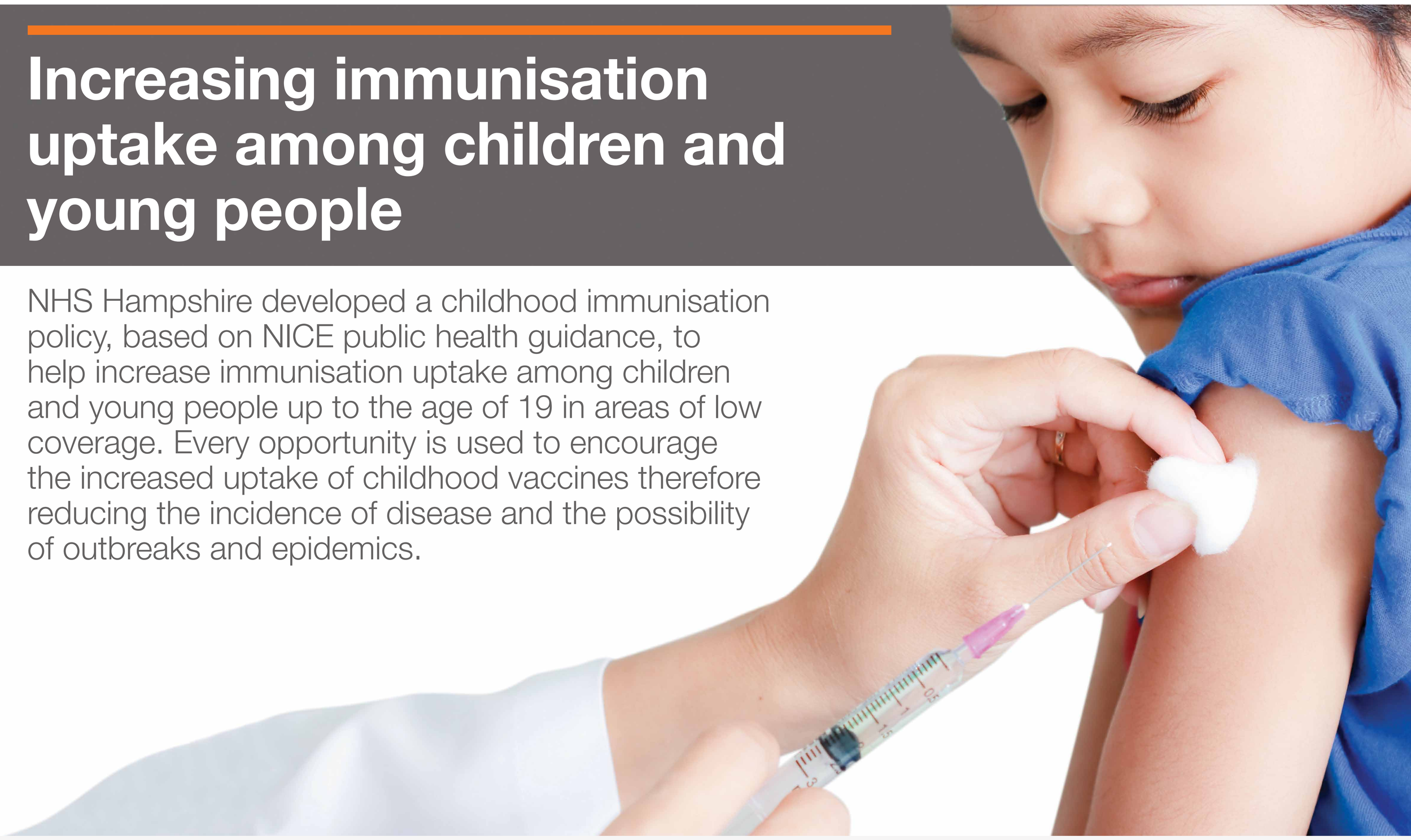
NHS
South of England

Increasing immunisation uptake among children and young people

NHS Hampshire developed a childhood immunisation policy, based on NICE public health guidance, to help increase immunisation uptake among children and young people up to the age of 19 in areas of low coverage. Every opportunity is used to encourage the increased uptake of childhood vaccines therefore reducing the incidence of disease and the possibility of outbreaks and epidemics.



Clarify the process for inviting children for vaccination

Increasing vaccine uptake across the South of England (Central) region to meet the World Health Organisation's 95 per cent uptake target for childhood immunisations was proving to be difficult.

There was a lack of consistency across the region which prompted NHS Hampshire to carry out a baseline assessment to identify the outliers.

Adopting a standardised process for inviting children and young people to attend for vaccination was identified as the best way to boost uptake levels. This would clarify the process for inviting children for vaccination, the steps to take when the child does not attend that initial appointment, streamline mechanisms for reporting immunisations, and would allow immunisation leads in the area the chance to audit the process.

Local immunisation guidelines were developed based on the NICE public health guidance on increasing immunisation uptake among children and young people aged less than 19 years in groups and settings where immunisation coverage is low.

Engage all relevant stakeholders

NHS Hampshire set up an expert reference group to identify best practice and to give the guideline the appropriate stakeholder credibility. The guideline was widely consulted on, including responses from Health Protection Agency colleagues.

Each practice was asked to identify an "immunisation champion" who could provide more effective links with the relevant PCT immunisation leads, as outlined in the NICE guidance.

The project board of stakeholders and partners across the region, worked with immunisation leads in all the PCTs to formulate and agree recommendations for improving vaccine uptake.

These recommendations are now being implemented in a formal pilot phase in Hampshire and East Berkshire. Outcomes of the pilots will be monitored through the immunisation leads group for the SHA region.

Immunisation champions can boost uptake

Following on from the circulation of the local guideline to practices in 2010, the SHA requested that Public Health Departments in PCTs undertake an audit post implementation of the guideline. The audit was repeated in 2012, and will be used to encourage Clinical Commissioning Groups to embed this guideline as good practice.

To ensure that this process remains effective, it requires the determination of immunisation champions in whatever guise they may be in the new architecture. Determination is required to continually review the implementation of the standard, to audit practice and ensure that new and developing organisations adopt this best practice.

The main challenge has been to ensure that all immunisation leads had implemented the standard, and were prepared to audit their practice across their locality. There was initial concern regarding the presence of two people at immunisation sessions. However, once we had clarified that this could be admin support and did not necessitate another qualified immuniser, these concerns were resolved.

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