

Effectiveness and acceptability of parental financial incentives and quasi-mandatory schemes for increasing uptake of vaccinations in preschool children: systematic review, qualitative study and discrete choice experiment

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Plain English summary

Increasing uptake of vaccinations in preschool children

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What was the problem?

About 5–10% of children starting school in England have not had all of their vaccinations. Some countries offer financial rewards to parents to vaccinate their children. Other countries have laws preventing unvaccinated children from attending school. We do not know if rewards or punishments increase vaccination rates. Nor do we know if they would be acceptable in the UK.

What did we do?

We summarised previous research on rewards and punishments for increasing preschool vaccinations. We also interviewed UK parents and professionals about rewards and punishments. Finally, we conducted an online survey with UK parents.

What did we find?

There is not enough previous research to tell if rewards or punishments work. Non-UK studies suggest that restricting school entry is more acceptable to parents than rewards.

In interviews and the online survey UK parents and professionals thought that rewards could work. They preferred offering rewards to everyone, rather than only to particular groups.

In interviews, parents preferred preventing unvaccinated children from attending school to universal rewards. In the online survey parents preferred rewards for everyone to restricting school entry. Parents may be more truthful online than in interviews.

Parents and professionals suggested many alternatives to rewards and punishments. They particularly liked more flexible appointments and better education.

What does this mean?

We cannot tell if rewards or punishments would encourage more parents to vaccinate their children. Universal rewards are more acceptable than targeted ones. Whether or not preventing unvaccinated children from attending school was preferable to rewards for everyone depended on how people were asked.

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