

# HEALTHY START



## **Healthy Start women's vitamin tablets distribution case study October 2012**

**Name of PCT:** Newham Public Health North East London and The City

**Region:** London

### **Status of vitamin distribution:**

A universal scheme, launched in Oct 2011, that provides three bottles of Healthy Start vitamins (6 month Healthy Start supply) for all pregnant women.

Eligibility for the scheme is based on area of residence; all pregnant women who are residents of Newham are eligible for the scheme.

### **Number and location of distribution points ( eg health clinics, children's centres, pharmacies).**

There are 3 distribution locations:

- Newham University Hospital antenatal centre
- St Stephen's Children's Centre
- Barking Birthing Centre

The first bottle is distributed to all pregnant women during their initial booking appointment at Newham University Hospital (NUH) antenatal centre. Subsequent bottles can be collected at any of the 3 distribution locations.

Healthy Start vitamins are distributed by midwives, health care assistants, Children's Centre front desk staff and the maternity dietitian.

### **Who/what was the driver for Healthy Start vitamin distribution in your PCT?**

- To prevent vitamin D deficiency in pregnant women and infants and to increase the number of eligible families registering for the government Healthy Start Scheme
- Prior to the scheme, there was 0% uptake of women's vitamins due to no distribution points in the borough

- The Demographic make-up of Newham means that there is a large proportion of the population at increased risk of vitamin D deficiency
- NICE recommends that Primary Care Trusts should promote the Healthy Start scheme and ensure that there is an adequate supply of vitamin supplements available
- GP's in Newham requested that Public Health provide healthy start vitamins due to inconsistent prescribing and the high cost of vitamin D supplements
- This is supported by the position statements on vitamin supplementation during pregnancy by the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food and Nutrition Policy and the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition
- Vitamin D needs assessment of antenatal population (from neighbouring London borough with a similar demographic population to Newham's) found that 74 % of women were vitamin D deficient; 100% defined as deficient were from black and ethnic minorities

**Organisation – how is the Healthy Start project organised in your PCT?  
Do you have a team? Who is in it? Do you have senior support?**

- A partnership between Newham Public Health, North East London and the City, and the Dietetic Department, Barts Health Trust, Newham University Hospital
- The scheme is managed and delivered by the maternity dietitian and a part time Healthy Start Coordinator.
- Quarterly reports and meetings with the Public Health team to review the service model and capacity
- There was no steering group established
- Quarterly meetings with other area Healthy Start Leads from North East London and the City to review and share best practices
- Stakeholder engagement by meeting with the following leads:
  - Midwifery
  - Antenatal Booking
  - Children's Centre staff
  - Early Intervention Nutrition Team
  - Health Visitors

**If you are giving vitamins out to women and children who do not qualify for the scheme, who approved your budget? Did you have to develop a business case?**

There is a Service Level Agreement in place which is funded by Newham Public Health, North East London and the City.

**How do you embed vitamin distribution into local delivery plans?**

The scheme was embedded as part of the initial and routine care antenatal pathway.

Having one main distribution site at the NUH antenatal booking centre, utilized by all pregnant women in the borough, proved to be a highly effective method of distribution.

**Staff training:**

A comprehensive training programme was delivered to the following health professionals by the Healthy Start Lead and Coordinator including:

- Midwives
- Health Care Assistants
- Community midwives,
- Health Visitors
- Children's centre front desk staff

In addition to training, a comprehensive communication plan was implemented to promote the scheme including:

- Promotional materials displayed at all distribution sites
- Staff wearing Healthy Start badges and lanyards
- Article in the Newham Council newsletter
- Media press release
- Hospital Bulletin

Presentation on the scheme at the Medicines Management Committee team meeting (consisting of GP and pharmacy leads).

**Did you have any administration issues e.g. float if you are selling vitamins? How did you manage these issues?**

The Healthy Start Receipt Form was revised to better determine which women were in receipt of the Healthy Start vouchers; therefore it can be included in the HSVR quarterly claim to reclaim vitamin costs back from the Department of Health.

**What would you have done differently with your distribution?**

Ensure there is a good collaboration with local GP's and community pharmacists at the beginning of the scheme.

## **What works and what is a challenge?**

### **What has worked well:**

- Vitamin distribution has exceeded original targets with an average of 97 % of women receiving the first bottle (target of 80%), and 73 % of women collecting subsequent bottles (target of 60 %)
- Giving the first bottle of vitamins directly to women at their initial antenatal appointment with directions to where they can collect subsequent bottles of vitamins
- Having one main site for vitamin distribution site where all pregnant women can collect vitamins during the initial and routine antenatal care appointments
- Employing a dedicated part-time Healthy Start Coordinator to order, distribute and monitor vitamins
- Putting in place a single point of ordering and distributing vitamins and collating returns to the Department of Health
- Collaborating with other Healthy Start Leads from across NHS North East London and the City helped to improve vitamin distribution

### **Challenges**

- Managing the programme within financial and staff resource constraints
- Poor knowledge amongst women of why they need to take healthy start vitamins and the benefits of vitamin D
- Getting midwives to register eligible women for the government Healthy Start scheme and also to have a conversation with the women about the importance of taking healthy start vitamins
- Difficulty getting NHS Supply Chain to deliver to other distribution locations which are Non- NHS premises. This presents a challenge for opening additional distribution locations with existing staff resources
- Getting GP's and community pharmacies to promote the local scheme

## What are your next steps in terms of Healthy Start – do you have targets or any specific aims?

- Looking at possibility of selling vitamins in the future for programme sustainability
- Engaging and involving community pharmacies and GP practices and getting them to display Healthy Start promotional materials
- Preparing plans to open an additional 3 distribution locations
- Expanding local scheme to offer children's drops and women vitamins to all breastfeeding mothers

## Are you evaluating your distribution? How are you doing this?

There is a robust monitoring and evaluation systems in place. The Healthy Start Receipt Form is used for all sites to record vitamins distributed and vouchers received; data from receipt forms is then entered by the Healthy Start Coordinator onto a monitoring spreadsheet.

## What advice would you give to a PCT who is looking at developing their distribution?

- Ensure there is a robust monitoring and evaluation system in place to calculate activity against performance goals
- Stakeholder engagement by meeting with department heads at the start of the scheme
- Provide a comprehensive training for all front line staff and health professionals
- Embed the scheme as part of the initial and routine care antenatal pathway from one main site (if feasible) rather than having multiple distribution sites

