

# Food Insecurity in the Paediatric Emergency Department

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## Introduction

Food insecurity (FI) has the potential to impact every stage of life, affecting development, wellbeing and life chances. Children in food insecure households are more likely to develop asthma, depression and other chronic conditions.<sup>1</sup>

This is the third project relating to FI that has been carried out in Paediatric ED in Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham. Initial projects<sup>2</sup> were carried out to identify food insecure families and to offer brief interventions by our social prescribers/link workers (SPLW).

## Aim & Objectives

This study aimed to identify barriers to accept help in those already identified as at risk in previous studies.

Objectives:

1. Follow up on FI families who were contacted by SPLW to get their feedback.
2. Determine potential reasons for patients who were food insecure but declined any support.
3. Identify the geographical areas with higher prevalence of FI

## Methods

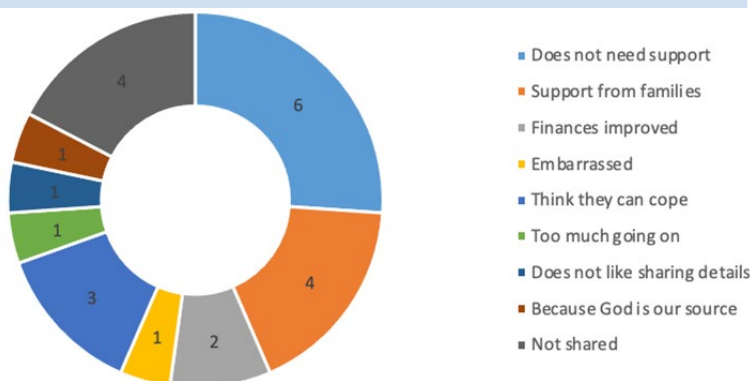


Table 2: FI families who refused any support

## Results

1. 76/205 patients (37%) screened positive for FI. Among them, 53 patients consented to SPLW referral and 23 patients declined help.
2. Out of 23 FI patient who were successfully contacted by SPLW, 1 was able to obtain feedback from 17 of them. Among them,
  - 6 patients accessed the support offered and 2 accessed some of the support offered.
  - 9 families reported improvement in their situation while 8 remained food insecure since filling in the feedback form.
  - Other social determinants were addressed, such as finances and child development.
  - The advice provided benefited a total of 93 individuals from these 23 families.
3. Barriers to seeking help were explored and data are summarized in Tables 1 and 2.
4. 47 families from Nottingham City, whereas 25 families from more rural areas of Nottingham.

FI+ and consented but declined	
Not needed	9
Family support	1
Accepted help on 2nd contact by myself	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>

Table 1: FI families who consented for referral but declined upon contact.

## Conclusion

In summary, a significant portion (37%) of families presented to the paediatric ED are struggling with food insecurity. Referral to a Social Worker (SPLW) appears to have a positive impact on families facing food insecurity. Not only that, SPLW helps tackle other social determinants too. Also we noted that a handful of patients could neither recall the conversations with SPLW nor access support offered, which could be due to language barriers, digital exclusion etc.

A page has been created on the NUH patient-facing website to summarize the useful resources available to assist patients dealing with food insecurity. This can be printed off or send electronically to FI patients, including those who may not want direct support at the time.

Scan QR code on the right to see resources available.



## References:

1. Thomas, M.M.C., Miller, D.P. and Morrissey, T.W. (2019) 'Food insecurity and child health', *Pediatrics*, 144(4). doi:10.1542/peds.2019-0397.
2. Sharkey E, Ollerton J, Gilhooley C, *et al.* 400 Prevalence of food insecurity in a paediatric emergency department and feasibility of clinician intervention *Archives of Disease in Childhood* 2023;108:A8-A9.