

**South Asian mothers' views and experiences of accessing
paediatric allergy services in Sheffield for their babies
and/or young children (Abstract only)**

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Title: South Asian mothers' views and experiences of accessing paediatric allergy services in Sheffield for their babies and/or young children

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To explore South Asian mothers' views and experiences of accessing paediatric allergy services.

Methods: Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with purposive sample of 10 mothers of Pakistani, Indian or Bangladeshi heritage with a child under 5 years with a known or suspected food allergy. Participants were recruited at Sheffield Children's Hospital allergy service and community venues attended by South Asian women. Interviews, conducted by multi-lingual researchers in participants' homes, were audio-recorded, translated, transcribed in English and thematically analysed. The themes were 'recognition'; 'help-seeking'; 'using health services'; 'caring for child'; 'and 'community perspectives'. The study received Health Research Authority approval and took place in Sheffield (UK) in 2018-19.

Results: 9 mothers in the sample had a child with delayed first attendance at allergy services; and 4 of these were 2 years or longer after first food reaction. This represents a significant delay in referral to allergy service. Reasons for delay included uncertainty about cause of symptoms, self-management including prolonged breastfeeding and food avoidance, and failure to recognise need to access primary care and allergy services. Many sought support and advice from family and friends who had a child with an allergy. When used, health services were viewed positively although the effectiveness of being seen in an allergy service was generally underplayed. Once educated families were able to better manage their child's allergy but unfortunately community understanding is poor and raises significant risks for children attending family events involving food such as weddings.

Conclusions: Despite wider evidence about health inequalities faced by South Asian groups no previous research has focused upon paediatric allergy. There is a need to work with the South Asian community to enhance understanding of allergy and the importance of having children seen earlier to prevent establishment of chronic disease and greater health disparity.