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# Food Refusal in Prison Healthcare

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**Independent Health Providers** Safeguarding Forum



# What factors lead to individuals refusing food?

- A protest or statement
- Mental Health issues
- Medical issues
- Substance abuse
- Coercion, threats, social or peer influence
- Trauma or past experiences
- Dietary restrictions, preferences or lack of access/resources

The logo for IHP SF, featuring a large white letter 'C' with the letters 'IHP SF' inside it, set against a purple background.

# Challenges in managing Food refusal cases in prison

- Duty Of Care
- Mental Health Considerations
- Security Concerns
- Legal and human rights
- Communication challenges
- Individual factors
- Potential for escalation
- Ethical dilemmas



# The Food Refusal Policy, Project and Toolkit Development



# Identifying gaps in knowledge and patient safety risks

- Pioneering – First project of its kind
- Prison healthcare is hidden
- Challenges recognising and understanding food refusal
- Mental Capacity assessments, partnership working, lack of joined up working
- Re-feeding Syndrome –Gap in knowledge and confidence

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# Increase in skills and knowledge



Spectrum Community Health CIC

Food Refusal Toolkit Training



[www.spectrum-cic.org.uk](http://www.spectrum-cic.org.uk)

[pr@spectrum-cic.nhs.uk](mailto:pr@spectrum-cic.nhs.uk)



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## Further Support and Resources

**Spectrum Safeguarding Team:**  
Safeguardingteam@spectrum-cic.nhs.uk

**Spectrum Policies available via the Intranet:**

- ✓ Food Refusal Policy
- ✓ Mental Capacity Act Policy
- ✓ Safeguarding Adults Policy

## Other Resources and guidance:



**Mental Capacity Act**  
Code of Practice, 2005

**HM Government, 2019:**  
DSO 03/2017; Care and management of  
detained individuals refusing food and/or fluid



**NICE 2010**  
Guidelines for the clinical management of  
people refusing food in IRCs and prisons

This Toolkit was developed by Donna Phillips, Named Nurse for Safeguarding, Spectrum Community Health CIC, as part of an NHS England funded project.

# Safer outcomes for vulnerable patients



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# What is in our toolkit?





# Wider Impact of the Project and what's next?

**BJN** Topics ▾ Issues CPD Events

PUBLIC HEALTH | NUTRITION

## A hidden challenge: exploring food refusal in prisons

20 April 2023 COMMENT Donna Phillips



References

In a nursing career of more than 22 years, food refusal – sometimes referred to in popular culture as a 'hunger strike' – is one of the most complex, multifaceted patient safety challenges I have seen facing health professionals. It is also one of the most misunderstood. For many people, prison nursing itself can seem quite mysterious – a unique environment so rarely in the spotlight, one that conjures up images of high walls, laminated keys and clinking gates. Perhaps it isn't so

02 April 2023 >



Volume 32 • Issue 8  
ISSN (print): 0966-0461  
ISSN (online): 2052-2819

## Mental Capacity Law and Policy

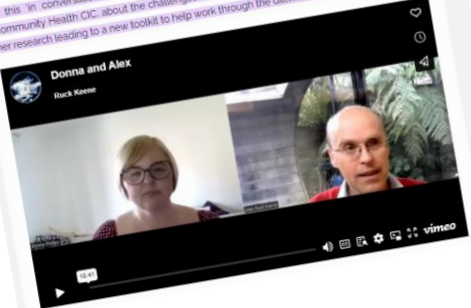
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### Refusing food in prison – in conversation with Donna Phillips

22 May 2023 Alex PK

In this 'in conversation' with I talk to Donna Phillips, Head of Safeguarding at Spectrum Community Health CIC, about the challenges that arise where prisoners refuse food, and about her research leading to a new toolkit to help work through the dilemmas that arise



Donna and Alex  
Rick Kinnear

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**Thank you**

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