



**Commission on Crime and Problem Gambling  
Criminal Justice Programme update – Neil Platt  
Monday 17 May 2021  
Zoom session, 2.00pm – 3.00pm**

**Apologies:** Jamie Bennett, Henrietta Bowden-Jones, Sarah Ramanauskas, Gerda Reith

**Present:** Lord Goldsmith (Chair), Matt Burton, Andrew Black, Sue Broadbent, Jon Collins, John Chisholm, Frances Crook, Andrew Neilson, Elizabeth Morony, Neil Platt, Norma Stepheson

**In attendance:** Gemma Buckland, Helen Churcher, Anita Dockley, Robert Preece, Catryn Yousefi

### **1. Chair's introduction**

The Chair welcomed Commissioners and gave apologies for those unable to attend. The Chair informed the meeting that Neil Platt would give a presentation, followed by questions from Commissioners.

### **2. Neil Platt and Matt Burton– Beacon Counselling Trust and Cheshire Constabulary**

Neil Platt gave a presentation to Commissioners providing an overview of Beacon Trust's ongoing work in police custody suites, as well with future plans for the project (slides attached). The pilot's public health modelling was based on evidence informed practice, supported and evaluated by GREO.

Neil Platt invited Matt Burton to contribute. Matt Burton provided some supplementary information about the pilot:

- It is inclusive of constabulary and metropolitan forces
- Early intervention benefits for service users and service providers (repeat demands)
- Professional accreditation based on the pilot could take advantage of the emphasis on training in professional development in policing

Matt Burton informed Commissioners of plans to engage with Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs). PCCs had been recently elected to four-year terms (all 43 forces) and would be drawing up policing and crime plans and priorities. Currently only one PCC includes problem gambling on their priority list. There is a trend of downward influence- funding and resource allocation is not made by Chief Constables if PCCs do not prioritise an issue. Letters would be sent to all PCCs, asking them to make problem gambling a priority, and/or to consider collaboration or funding allocation for liaison and diversion teams, along with training. This would be supported by a strong evidence base from Cleveland constabulary. Matt Burton was hopeful that the letters

would elicit interest. When PCCs scrutinise and show interest, Chief Constables tend to act quickly.

### **3. Questions from Commissioners**

The Chair thanked Neil Platt and Matt Burton. The Chair opened floor for comments and questions from Commissioners

It was agreed that Matt Burton would include Norma Stephenson in his communications with Cleveland constabulary- as a member of the police and crime panel, she would be able to maintain pressure on the issue.

#### **Andrew black asked:**

*What is the process in custody suites? How are people targeted for support?*

Neil Platt explained that, under new guidance, when individuals are arrested they are screened by a health professional for vulnerabilities. They are asked a series of questions relating to psychosocial issues, substance use etc. Currently, the only forces which ask questions about gambling related harm are Cheshire and Manchester. The Beacon Trust pilot would provide training on screening for problem gambling (how to ask the questions, background knowledge etc), which will be incorporated into routine screening for gambling related harm. Training would also be provided about trigger offences (fraud, domestic violence etc)- if problem gambling or gambling related harm is missed on the first screening, it will be raised again during investigation/questioning.

Matt Burton explained that the staff in custody suites are impartial and there to maintain the welfare of detainee and support the investigation team. They support: arranging legal representation; phone calls; health care; wider problem solving; and signposting to services. Successful approaches result in a reduction in repeat attendance, and problem solving through liaison and diversion.

#### **John Chisholm asked**

*Is there any vision in NHS as to how a similar approach might be used in health care settings e.g., mental health services?*

Neil Platt noted that he would be working with social prescribing practitioners in the NHS (link workers in GP surgeries). It is moving up the NHS agenda and the training pilot will be rolled out to health care professionals

#### **Lord Goldsmith asked:**

*Are you confident that screening effective in the right identifying cases?*

Neil Platt explained that screening is effective dependent on authenticity of respondent at that stage. Neil Platt noted findings not dissimilar to work on suicide, in that this could be the first time that a trained individual has asked that question. Evidence shows that responses are authentic. Neil Platt noted that this has been a question of concern over the years. Regarding the use of other screening tools used internationally, Neil Platt explained that the Cheshire pilot is based on a 1988 study using the Lie Bet screening tool. This study found that between 17 and 32 per cent of responders scored as problem gamblers.

**Lord Goldsmith asked:**

*What should we be doing as a Commission?*

Neil Platt noted that the Beacon project is generating degree of momentum. Going forward, they will be considering a steering group/panel. It would be useful to include a Commissioner from the Howard League.

Matt Burton explained that, from a policing perspective, he is on the inside trying to effect change and trying to influence the debate. He noted that it would be helpful if the Commission could work to assist in influencing or educating PCCs (e.g., by letter). Matt Burton would assist in this as a Commissioner.

Commissioners supported the suggestion that the Commission could write to PCCs. It was agreed that Matt Burton would share the contents of his letter to PCCs with Commissioners.

**4. AOB**

Anita Dockley gave a brief research update.

**Police policy and strategy**

The Howard League have been liaising with Neil Platt and Matt Burton regarding their work in custody suites. An FOI has been issued to all forces, asking about their screening processes and an indication the types of crimes related to problem gambling. Two thirds of responses have been received and are undergoing analysis. Howard League staff would pull out some key facts to include in communications with PCCs. The aim of the communication would be to elicit an understanding of strategic approach. It was agreed that Anita Dockley would meet with Neil Platt and Matt Burton to discuss the communications being sent to PCCs. The aim of the research is to build on and add emphasis to the work being done by Beacon Counselling Trust, concluding with a summer publication.

**Sentencers' understanding and treatment of problem gamblers**

A full draft of the report has been received. Howard League staff would work to prepare it for publication

**Exploring people's experience of crime and problem gambling**

The researcher has almost completed the field work and has obtained the base line sample. All interviews should be completed by the end of June.

Anita Dockley thanked Commissioners for their support in developing research projects and leads.

**5. Next meeting**

TBC

Minutes agreed by the Chair 29/06/2021

HC/CY, 24/06/21