



Gambling Harms and the Criminal Justice System

Criminal Justice and Gambling Harm Thematic Workshop #1 Summary of key insights and proposed actions for stakeholders

GamCare's Criminal Justice and Gambling Harm programme is a two-year initiative to test and evidence approaches to improve awareness of gambling harms and access to treatment and support for people across the criminal justice system. CJGH thematic workshops present the opportunity to discuss current developments and issues in gambling and criminal justice sectors, developing our thinking and presenting recommendations for actions.

For the first of these workshops, around 35 professionals from academia, criminal justice services, gambling harm organisations, and people with lived experience came together with two aims: to share their understanding and experience of the relationship between gambling harm and the criminal justice system, and to identify barriers preventing people experiencing gambling harm from receiving the support they need.

The workshop comprised a panel of speakers (please see panel to the right). Two speakers with lived experience of gambling harms and the criminal justice system (one as a gambler, one as the wife of a gambler) demonstrated with their stories, that the Criminal Justice System is not equipped to deal with their needs.

Following the panel, we had reflection space for groups to share their insight, views and expertise, suggesting how people with gambling harms within Criminal Justice settings could be better supported.

Themes emerging from the discussions have been listed below, with details of the issues and recommendation set out on the next page.

- Criminal justice systems recording and processes
- Current work/pilots and what they tell us
- Future work/wider research

Panel

Anna Hemmings, CEO, GamCare:
Gambling harm overview

Mark Pickering, Programme Support Mentor, EPIC Restart Foundation:
Lived Experience of gambling harm and crime



George Barrow, Senior Policy Officer, Probation Policy Unit, Ministry of Justice:
Strategy and Policy; Current resources and needs within HMPPS and Developments within HMPPS Gambling Harm Working Group

Joanna Barker:
Affected Other Lived Experience of gambling harm and crime

Sarah Page, Senior Lecturer Sociology & Criminology, Director of the Staffordshire University Crime and Society Group, School of Justice, Security and Sustainability, Staffordshire University:
Sentencing, crime and problem gambling

Fiona Macleod, Director of Clinical and Communities, GamCare:
Session highlights

 INSIGHTS	 RECOMMENDATIONS
Recognising gambling issues	
<p>The right questions need to be asked in order to identify gambling harm effectively. Currently, screening for gambling harm remains patchy and only occurs in some settings and in some areas. It is also unclear where the screening should be positioned within assessments: as a standalone question, or within finance, mental health, addiction or wellbeing sections.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gain buy-in at national level from all areas of the sector, to introduce screening for gambling harms ● Embedding screening questions into day-to-day processes at the assessment stages of each area of the Criminal Justice system.
<p>The extent to which gambling harms remain a hidden problem is illustrated where, despite an individual's index offence being directly related to their gambling, it was not picked up as a criminogenic need at court, in prison, nor on probation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff across the Criminal Justice system need to be aware of gambling harms and triggers, and be able to identify and discuss problems with their clients ● Training about gambling harms should be available to all staff working in the Criminal Justice system
<p>The financial limits that can be considered in the Magistrates Courts are far smaller than the amounts typically involved with gamblers' debts and/or amounts defrauded to fund gambling. This results in automatic escalation to the Crown Court, and harsher sentencing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gambling activity and gambling treatment should feature in Court reports, in order for magistrates to be able to make decisions with access to all relevant information/mitigation ● Changes and better understanding of gambling related harm would support the Courts system to better meet its obligations
<p>When courts are tasked with recovering debts as a result of defrauding a business or employer, no consideration is given to the needs of family members who are associated with it – the needs of partners/spouses, and children, are not taken into account. Affected others can feel they are treated as guilty by association, and they are left to deal with the financial fallout (e.g. loss of family home).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use training to create better understanding of how gambling and any offences associated with it can affect family members and friends of the gambler ● Discussions amongst sentencers to discuss how to recover debts without adversely impacting those people who are unavoidably affected by the crime committed by another person
Evidence base	
<p>Gambling harm does not have parity with substance misuse/other addictions in terms of awareness, funding and reach of treatment, partly due to lack of credible evidence of need.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● More academic research is needed to build a comprehensive evidence base ● Lived experience collaboration should be embedded within research design
<p>Criminal Justice professionals should be fully engaged with and proactive in responding to pilot projects that gambling harm organisations are delivering, in order for learning to be maximised and embedded in day-to-day practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● More pilot projects for treatment and education are needed to explore and test the effectiveness of different approaches ● Network of criminal justice pilots should be established to build on the 'patchwork' of current knowledge and avoid duplication ● Learning from pilots should be shared across all services to showcase best practise

 INSIGHTS	 RECOMMENDATIONS
Knowledge gaps / priorities for future work	
<p>The inclusion of people with lived experience (PWLE) at the earliest stages of project development will result in better understanding of how the Criminal Justice system is experienced by gamblers and affected others, and will result in better-informed services which are responsive to their needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pilot/project planning should include input from PWLE across the full project timeline ● PWLE should be offered a variety of ways to input to service/research design, to ensure that their input is meaningful and acted upon
<p>There are a number of communities and groups of people for whom the risks of involvement in the Criminal Justice system, and risk of harm from problem gambling, are typically higher than the general population.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● People serving in the Armed Forces and Veterans ● People with ADHD and other neurodiverse behaviours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In order to better understand the risks and support needs of these and other groups, research should be commissioned and disseminated across Criminal Justice settings ● Existing evidence from gambling harm services should be collated to provide a clearer picture of current uptake of services

Reference material

Research referred to during the workshop:

Commission on Crime & Problem Gambling: Sentencers' understanding and treatment of problem gamblers – The report of the Commission on Crime and Problem Gambling; Sarah Page, Staffordshire University
[Sentencers-report-FINAL-Online.pdf \(howardleague.org\)](https://www.howardleague.org/sentencers-report-final-online.pdf)

The United Kingdom Armed Forces Veterans' Health and Gambling Study: Swansea University
<https://s31949.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/20210906-SwanseaUni-Gambling2-Report-v8-FINAL.pdf>

CJGH thematic workshop #2 will be held on Wednesday 23rd March 2022: 'Gambling Harm Support, Toolkits and Treatment in Prison'

Featuring experts in this area, we will discuss the question **'What is needed specifically in prisons to better serve those experiencing gambling harms?'**

We will look specifically at exploring treatment options, development of digital products, and support/training for staff.

For more information, please contact Chris Walker at chris.walker@gamcare.org.uk.