

Disordered gambling and crime – The PCC role BRIEFING SESSION – 1 December 2021



In a nutshell ...

1. Most people who gamble do not experience any significant harms	2. Around 300,000 people in the UK are problem gamblers	3. It is estimated that problem gambling is linked to one suicide a day
4. Problem gambling drives crime, including theft, fraud, and domestic abuse	5. There is a lack of knowledge and targeted activity in the CJS	6. PCCs can help ensure services/training are provided in the CJS, and deliver public health responses with partners

Some key facts and figures

- Gambling-related finance problems are associated with a range of crimes including theft, fraud, and domestic violence.
- A [research review by Public Health England](#) estimated that gambling-related harms cost society at least £1.27 billion a year and the direct costs to government of criminal activity related to gambling is c. £162.5 million annually.
- The link between domestic abuse/violence and gambling is [recognised](#) in practice, but the UK evidence base behind this is still lacking.
- A [Select Committee investigation](#) concluded that one third of a million of us are ‘problem gamblers’, and that there are 55,000 problem gamblers aged 11 to 16.
- On average, one ‘problem gambler’ commits suicide every day.
- The most socio-economically deprived and disadvantaged groups in England have the lowest gambling participation rates, but the highest levels of harmful gambling. 29% of betting shops are in the top 10% of the most deprived post code areas by crimes (more on the links with deprivation [here](#)).
- 20% of BAME adults who gamble experience some problems associated with their gambling compared to 12% of white adults. 49% of white problem gamblers and 75% from minority ethnic communities say they want treatment, support, or advice (more on the links with ethnicity [here](#))
- Online gambling accounts for 40% of the UK market’s ‘gross gambling yield’ and this amounted to £5.7bn from remote gambling in 2019-20.

Some recent stories from the media:

In November, it was reported that a Portsmouth GP had been jailed for embezzling more than £1.1 million over six weeks to pay for online gambling [here](#)

In October, it was reported that a carer from Liverpool had stolen £325K from her family to fund a gambling addiction [here](#)

Another recent cases involving £1.3 million of stolen money can be found [here](#),

Policy overview

- The Gambling Act 2005 is the basis for regulation of gambling. A Call for Evidence was launched in Dec 2020 with a focus on gambling in the digital age, and [the 2005 Act is under review](#).
- The Gambling Act 2005 established the [Gambling Commission](#), which is an executive non-departmental public body and sponsored by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport, and responsible for regulation of gambling in the UK.
- The Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) is used to compensate victims in cases of gambling related fraud, theft, etc. by confiscating assets. In the case of problem gamblers they will often resort to crime when all other assets have been exhausted, and the only realisable assets are often with the family. The Gambling Commission may compensate victims.
- Recent reforms include cutting the maximum stake on fixed odd terminals from £100 to £2, tightening age and identity checks, banning gambling on credit cards, and making it mandatory for operators to sign up to GAMSTOP (online self-exclusion scheme).
- Founded in 1997, [GamCare](#) is the leading provider of information, advice, and support for anyone affected by gambling harms, and operates the National Gambling Helpline. Some critics do question its independence as it is funded by the gambling industry.
- £100 million has been earmarked for treatment over the next 4 years, with a commitment to open up 15 specialist NHS clinics, the first three of which are open, including specialist support for children and young people through the London clinic.
- Local Authorities remain responsible for licencing of local gambling premises under the Gambling Act, with the 3 following priorities:
 - preventing gambling from being a source of crime or disorder, being associated with crime or disorder or being used to support crime
 - ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way
 - protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling.

Recent reports

- The LGA published [Tackling gambling related harm – a whole council approach](#) in 2018. This highlights the need for a public health, whole system approach to what is a complex problem, and discusses the role of councils.
- Public Health England published [Gambling Related Harms: Evidence Review](#) on 30 September. It estimated that the cost of the harms associated with gambling was at least £1.27 billion in 2019-20 in England alone, including a £619.2 million cost for gambling-related suicides and a £62.8 million cost for homelessness associated with problem gambling. Direct costs to government of criminal activity related to gambling was estimated at £162.5 million annually. It also found a clear link between higher levels of alcohol consumption and harmful gambling.

▶ APCC Briefing Paper – Addictions and Substance Misuse

- The Howard League’s [Commission on Crime and Problem Gambling](#), chaired by Lord Goldsmith QC, published the [State of Play](#) in October 2021. It concluded that problem gambling leads to crime but that there is a worrying lack of knowledge or targeted activity within the CJS to address it. For example, a pilot project in Cheshire indicates that as many as one in eight people arrested may have a gambling problem. There is hardly any support in prisons, and it is not well understood by probation and other CJS professionals.

Checklist for Police and Crime Commissioners – some suggestions

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| ✓ Ensure you are aware of and contribute to Local Authority reviews of their Gambling Statement of Principles | ✓ Promote training for professionals working with offenders and others who may have gambling problems | ✓ Where this is not happening ask them to develop proposals for screening going forward |
| ✓ Assess what services are available locally and advocate for better access | ✓ Ask your commissioning leads to review whether gambling harms are screened for in services | ✓ Raise the issue of problem gambling in local partnerships and develop a plan to address it. |

We’d also welcome your continued involvement in supporting the APCC’s Addictions and Substance Misuse portfolio to shape national policy on tackling addictions and addressing the link to crime, including gambling addictions. This portfolio is led by Joy Allen (PCC for Durham) and Dave Sidwick (PCC for Dorset). The APCC’s PCC’s Making a Difference Report (2020) on Drugs and Alcohol can be found [here](#)

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