

Report



Reducing Gambling Harm in Glasgow A Community Conversation

The Health and Social Care Alliance (The ALLIANCE)
Zoom Meeting, Thursday 6th August 2020, 18.30- 20.30
Event Report

Welcome and introductions

Will Griffiths, the ALLIANCE

Will welcomed everyone and ran through the event housekeeping rules. The group agreed to an ALLIANCE co-facilitator taking notes during the event. These would be written up as a report, shared with those attending and posted on the ALLIANCE website following the event; identifiable information would *not* be report. Will introduced Michelle Gillies from the Scottish Public Health Network who would be speaking about a project in Glasgow to tackle gambling harms.

The event was attended by six people with direct lived experience of gambling harms and two social reporters.¹ A member of the RCA Trust, a local treatment provider, was on stand-by to support anyone who felt affected by the discussion; people were signposted to the telephone contact in the event chatbox. Will shared with the group that he was SafeTalk and Scottish Mental Health First Aid trained.

Will described the ALLIANCE's role in leading a national programme of work to support the involvement of experts by experience in the National Strategy to Reduce Gambling Harms in Scotland.

The ALLIANCE are also leading on engaging people and communities in a local project to tackle gambling harms in the City of Glasgow. This was the first engagement event for the project, referred to as 'the Glasgow Project'.

¹ The social reporters were people without direct lived experience of gambling harm, but who have close contact with people with lived experience through the work they do. They attended the event to present the views of the people they work with, who wanted to share their views, but who did not wish to attend the event as doing so would identify them as experiencing gambling harm.

The aim of the event was to bring together local people with lived experience of gambling harms to hear about the Glasgow project so that they could decide if, and how, they might like to get involved and have a ‘What matters to you?’ conversation about tackling gambling harms in the City.

The Glasgow Project

Michelle Gillies, Scottish Public Health Network

Michelle shared a PowerPoint presentation with an overview of the Glasgow project. This is 3-year project that will use a ‘Whole System Approach’ to understand how people and communities in the City experience gambling harms and decide what actions we could take collectively to tackle them. The project is funded from settlement funds, agreed by the Gambling Commission, the UK gambling regulator. The project will look at all the factors that influence a person or communities experience of gambling harm rather than focus on individual gambling behaviours.

The project team have started collecting information to understand the ways in which people and communities are affected by gambling harms in Glasgow, to look at what the evidence tells us works in tackling gambling harms and to map what is already being done. This information will be used to help create a shared understanding of the problem and find solutions. Actions to tackle gambling harm will be agreed based on local needs and priorities. These will be tested and evaluated. The learning will be shared to help others working to tackle gambling harms or using the whole system approach to tackle other complex problems, for example obesity.

The project is looking for experts by experience to work alongside experts in policy, practice and research, sharing their ideas, insights and perspectives. Michelle said people can get involved in various ways depending on what they are comfortable with. She stressed that gambling harms is just one part of a person’s story and the project team value all of an expert’s experiences of growing up, living, studying, working and playing in Glasgow.

The group were asked if they had any questions or comments about the presentation or project. These are summarised below.

Are any education bodies in Glasgow involved in the project?

Michelle said that an elected member from Glasgow City Council who sits on the project advisory board has been in contact with Schools and Learning at Glasgow City Council. Michelle agreed that educational settings are important when thinking about prevention and early intervention opportunities.

How much will the Gambling Commission influence the project and what level of interaction will there be with them?

Michelle clarified that the Commission are the UK gambling regulator. The project was funded through a Regulatory Settlement approved by the Commission; this is money that has been taken from industry in fines, not funding from the voluntary levy. The funding application submitted to the Gambling Commission outlined what the project intends to achieve and some key milestones, but the project team have a lot of scope around the 'how'. For example, the project will produce an action plan to tackle gambling harms in the City. The Gambling Commission will have no influence over what is in this action plan; the action plan will be coproduced by local people and communities and partners and will reflect local needs and priorities. The Commission support the project. It has been called a 'pathfinder' in the National Strategy to Reduce Gambling Harms in Scotland. Michelle said that if local experts by experience felt they would like to arrange a session to engage directly with the Gambling Commission it would be possible to do so as part of the work of the project.

What outputs will there be from the project?

Michelle clarified that there will be a number of outputs from the project with the most important being the local action plan with agreed actions to tackle gambling harms across the whole system that are co-owned by partners. It will be important that we capture all of the learning from the process of making the action plan, not just any changes that happen as a result of the action plan being put in place, to understand what works and make sure the learning is shared more widely.

Who are the important local actors to influence?

Michelle confirmed that local supporters of this project include elected members and policy officers from the Glasgow City Council, representatives from the local Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), NHS, Community Planning Partnership (which includes community justice), Glasgow City Licensing board, academics from the University of Glasgow and the ALLIANCE as well as other local charities. Those sitting on the Project Advisory Board will help us access other people and organisations we need to influence and work with, from across the whole system. As the project develops, we hope to expand the network of people interested in tackling gambling harms locally and nationally.

How does the Glasgow project relate to Scotland Reducing Gambling Harms?

Will noted the Scotland Reducing Gambling Harms is a national project led by the ALLIANCE which will support and influence the Glasgow project, but the projects are separate. The Glasgow project is a great opportunity to do something in local. It is the first project of this kind in Scotland. Similar work is happening in Manchester.

Gambling is a class issue. Will it be recognised as such?

[Context: A participant described a disadvantaged area of Glasgow with a population of 41,000 that has 21 bookmakers, 2 arcades, 2 bingo halls and 2 pawn shops; an affluent area, with the same population, had only 2 bookmakers. The participant

described this as evidence that the gambling Industry is ahead of legislators and targeting vulnerable populations and issued a call for action].

Michelle described evidence of gambling harms disproportionately affecting disadvantaged people and communities, including the clustering of 'environmental bads' in disadvantaged areas of Glasgow. She said the Fairer Scotland Duty places a responsibility on all statutory agencies think about inequalities in decision making. Tackling inequalities is a key national public health priority. The Scottish Public Health Network are part of the new national public health agency, Public Health Scotland. Framing gambling harms as an inequalities issue is important.

What change is possible when so much tax revenue is generated from gambling?

[Context: Discussion around gaming machines in pubs and licensed premises]

Michelle said that licensing of land-based premises is complex and noted devolved powers are limited. Under the current legislation, Licensing Boards in Scotland do not have powers of enforcement or compliance and the Act 'aims to permit' gambling so approaches licensing boards and public health teams might use in response to licensing applications where there is evidence of overprovision in relation to alcohol can't be used for gambling. There are new approaches emerging, for example Newham have used a cumulative impact approach to address clustering of land-based bookmakers, but these can face costly legal challenge.

Which members of Glasgow Licensing Board are involved in the project?

Michelle said that Gillian McNaught, Senior Solicitor with the City of Glasgow Licensing Board sits on the Project Advisory Board. A number of policy officers and elected members from the City Council, who sit on a wide range of Committees are also involved, including Cllr Christie, Cllr Ferns and Cllr Hunter.

How would the project be affected by a review of the 2005 Gambling Act?

Michelle noted that although there was political commitment to review the 2005 Gambling Act a timeline had not been set. She said an advantage of the whole system approach is that it lets you to look at how changes in one part of the system, like new legislation, might affect other parts of the system and adapt in response.

Group discussion: key themes

Will introduced the 'Jigsaw lid', which was developed by COPE Scotland as a tool to capture and visualise themes arising from discussions between key stakeholders.² The group were asked 'What matters to You?' in tackling gambling harms. Will explained that a Jigsaw lid of the key themes from the discussion would be made and shared with the group after the event. During the project there would be opportunities

² www.cope-scotland.org/index.php/latest-blog/the-jigsaw-continues

to carry out a similar exercise with other stakeholder groups and compare lids to help create a shared understanding of the perspectives of different stakeholders. Below are the key themes and messages that came up during this discussion.

The role of Experts by Experience

All participants agreed that experts by experience have an important role to play in reducing gambling harms, from prevention and education through to help, support and treatment. As an example, the “When the fun stops, stop” public awareness campaign was felt to be insensitive and ineffective; public information messages co-designed by experts by experience would be more likely to resonate with people experiencing harm. It was suggested that storytelling, through various media including the arts, could be used in school and educational settings to raise awareness of gambling harms. Sharing stories and supporting others to do so was seen a key step in a recovery journey for some people who have experienced harm. There was agreement of the importance of the experiences of those affected by the gambling of others, but a challenge engaging those people with shame and stigma being a significant barrier. The importance of involving experts by experience in all activities, from research through to policy and legislation, was noted.

Pathways to help, support and treatment

Societal awareness of the harm gambling can cause was felt to be low. It was noted that people experiencing gambling harms do not always know how to access help and support; for some stigma was identified as a barrier to doing so. It was noted that health and social care professionals do not screen for gambling problems and their awareness of the range of harms gambling can cause and pathways to help, support and treatment, is also low. Raising awareness of gambling harms with staff in primary care and mental health service providers was identified as a priority area. One participant described being mis-diagnosed by four different psychiatrists who failed to recognise that their mood swings were correlated to their gambling wins and losses. Participants described people affected by gambling harms being sent from pillar to post without having their needs met; community link workers were identified as having a potentially important role to play in addressing this. The lack of specialist treatment available in Scotland was highlighted; it was necessary for some people to travel to London to access specialist treatment. Ringfenced NHS funding for specialist treatment and public information campaigns was called for.

Meeting whole family needs

Gambling was recognised as a cause and consequence of adverse childhood experiences. The group agreed on the need to take a whole person, trauma informed approach to meeting the needs of people who have experienced gambling harms in *all* settings; examples of trauma informed practice in health care and education settings in Glasgow were given and a challenge laid down as to how this could be scaled across the City. The ripple effect of gambling harms highlighted the need for

whole family care. The impact of gambling harms on wider communities, as a cause and consequence of inequalities, was also stressed.

Education

Preventing gambling harms through education was identified as a priority. The group debated the most effective way to deliver this for children and young people who were identified as a key group; one participant noted the existing evidence base in this area was limited. There was broad agreement that experts by experience could play a valuable role in sharing their stories to highlight the risks and harms associated with gambling. It was recognised that educational messages must be age appropriate; the age group 15 – 16 years old was identified as being an age at which young people could understand hard-hitting stories from experts by experience and those stories may influence their decision making given young people are not yet (legally) able to gamble at this age. The group discussed whether talks from experts by experience or information embedded in the wider school curriculum would be more effective. It was suggested that workshops to promote awareness, understanding and compassion could be delivered in schools. It was felt to be important that all preventative interventions take account of the wider societal context, including the normalisation and glamorisation of gambling by the industry; the importance of de-glamorising gambling was emphasised by all participants. The need to educate parents about the risk and harms associated with children and young people gambling was raised.

Children and young people

The group recognised gambling as a cause and consequence of adverse childhood experiences. Concerns were expressed over the normalisation of gambling and the impact of this on children and young people. The interface between gaming and gambling was seen as important. As well as being exposed to gambling products such as loot boxes, children and young people were said to be exposed to gambling advertising and sports sponsorship, and gambling-style products that reinforce potentially harmful behaviours; access to machines in high street arcades were given as an example. Glasgow was recognised as a City with a large student population; students were identified as vulnerable to gambling harms group (transitional point in their life, often away from home and with some disposable income) and often targeted by the gambling industry. Students were seen as a priority group to target.

Harmful products – machine gaming

The widespread availability of machine gambling was discussed. One participant described 22.5% of incomes from pubs being generated by fixed odds betting terminals (FOBT) machines. These machines were described as pervasive in settings beyond bookmakers, such as service stations and high street arcades. The risks and harms associated with these machines was highlighted with the participant describing £5 million per day being lost to fixed odds betting terminals in Scotland.

Licensing

The group considered the role of licensing, particularly in relation to machine gaming. This was recognised as a complex legal area with low awareness among the public and other key stakeholders about how licensing works in relation to gambling; this was clearly identified as a barrier to citizens and in particular, people and communities affected by gambling harm to engage in the process. The limited powers of enforcement and compliance in Scotland were noted. The group felt that it would be useful to hear from the local Licensing Board to understand how licensing works. The potential for experts by experience to work with licensing boards to build the evidence base and make the case for change was noted. It was recognised that local licensing boards had no powers over online gambling which is regulated by the Gambling Commission. Some participants identified opportunities to raise issues directly with the Gambling Commission through the Gambling Commission's Expert by Experience group.

Research

The group agreed that there is a need to build the evidence base around gambling harms and how to tackle these. The social and economic costs of gambling were identified as a key area to explore; examples of metrics that could be used to capture the economic costs of gambling included benefit claims. Glasgow was noted to be a centre of excellence in gambling research with examples given of the mapping work that showed clustering of 'environmental bads' in disadvantaged areas. All agreed that experts by experience should have a role in co-designing and co-producing research to inform policy and practice.

Closing statement

Michelle thanked everyone for being so generous in sharing their time and for their honesty and openness sharing their insights and experiences. The areas the group felt were important in tackling gambling harms would be explored further. Many of these, for example pathways to help, support and treatment had also been identified by other key stakeholders as priority areas for action.

Michelle said that there would be lots of opportunities for people to get involved in the project in different ways. She said that it would be important for people to think carefully about what they'd feel comfortable with. She also said it would be important to manage expectations. The project will be working with experts by experience as well as experts in policy, practice and research – everyone's voice should be heard. The project might identify some actions that are 'quick wins' but some will be longer term goals. Some areas identified as priorities for action at the event are outside of our control locally; legislation does not lie with the City Council or even the Scottish Government. This does not mean we can do nothing. We can work together to build an evidence base to argue for change.

Next steps and close

Will thanked all the people that attended the event and outlined the next steps:

- A note of meeting will be shared with Michelle's presentation slides.
- The ALLIANCE will follow up with everyone to see if they would to be involved in the project going forward and explore how.

Everyone attending was invited to email Will if they have an thoughts of ideas they'd like to share about the project [william.griffiths@alliance-scotland.org.uk]

Appendix

Process for recruiting for the event

People were recruited for the event by publicising the opportunity to take part on the ALLIANCE webpage and sharing this link throughout the ALLIANCE's membership and key contacts working on reducing gambling harm. Members of a Glasgow project working group on Equalities, Engagement and Experience were asked to share the event through their networks. A press release was also produced and shared with key Glasgow media institutions.

Attendees would approach the ALLIANCE as event organiser and ask to be part of the event. Informed consent to take part was obtained through email in line with the ALLIANCE's Privacy Policy.³

³ <https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/privacy-policy/#expanded>