



## **Three Horizons Lived Experience Event: reducing gambling harm**

**Tuesday 10 November, 18.30 – 20.00 (virtual)**

### **Introductions**

Will Griffiths (the ALLIANCE) welcomed everyone to the conversation, explained how the meeting would be conducted and invited the co-facilitators and the participants to introduce themselves.

Will explained the purpose of the meeting: to take things a step further, building on the conversations and events to date, which have drawn out the priority areas that have been identified by the people with lived experience. Now we want to plot a course forward.

Co-facilitator Graham Leicester, from International Futures Forum, introduced himself. Catherine-Rose Stocks-Rankin from Matter of Focus introduced herself as notetaker and evaluator for the programme.

All other participants introduced themselves and their purpose for being at the meeting.

Key themes from these introductions:

- a desire to collaborate and do something to make a difference;
- advocate for a public health approach;
- advocate for mental health issues;
- advocate for partners and family members;
- support awareness raising in this very important year in the world of gambling;
- great to be involved in something that is bigger than oneself;
- recognising the importance of passing on knowledge about what reduces gambling harm;
- the importance of education for young people about gaming and gambling;
- noting stigma as a key barrier for accessing care and support.

### **Setting the scene**

Will described the work done to date. Together we are setting up the Scottish Lived Experience Forum. We have set the terms of reference (from the meeting in August) and identified the priority areas for action in reducing gambling harm, particularly those that we can push forward in Scotland.

Alongside the Forum, there is the Scottish Implementation Group, the key audience for the Scottish Lived Experience Forum. The Scottish Implementation Group is



Graham thanked participants for the detailed comments they had already offered, by email, on the Three Horizons map developed out of their previous conversations (see above).

The focus today would be on what is missing from the map rather than adding to the existing detail. The conversation will concentrate on the third horizon – our aspirations – and the hope and encouragement we can find in the present to suggest it is indeed possible to reach these goals.

The new third horizon system will have its roots in the present. Once we have imagined the new system, we start to be able to see it around us, even if only in small pockets. And we can imagine making our own moves, our own contributions, to growing it - through the seeds we plant, the activities we pursue, in the present.

Graham pointed to the box on the map marked 'Hope and Encouragement'. Today's conversation is about what fits in that box. What has really helped or is helping you? What have you found in your experience has given you hope and encouragement that a better system is possible? Where is it happening already? If I wanted to see it in practice where would I go, who would you introduce me to?

This is a vital part of the map. It is what provides energy for the transition towards a new pattern, a better system. And it is not something that policy makers can find. We don't know where to look. And we would not recognise it if we saw it. This is the kind of weight that only people with real lived experience can bring.

### **Hope and Encouragement**

This led to a rich conversation, focused on hope in the present but also ranging further to take in things that need to change, things that get in the way, things that might help make the transition and so on. The comments are captured below, loosely clustered into categories.

### **What works?**

- Smart Recovery course at an Addiction Recovery Clinic in Falkirk:
  - o An integral part of my recovery. The course explained to me why gambling became a daily part of my life. It explained how the endorphins work, how it became learned behaviour. It was only through the course that I got that eureka moment. Talking about the way the brain works had been put to me before – but it was the course that turned things around. Note I am really missing this in Covid lockdown.
- Getting psychological support:
  - o My GP finally understands me – finally got referred for psychological support. I got that help because I had a conversation with Matt Gaskell – who is a Consultant Psychologist running the NHS Northern Gambling Service in Northern England – and he recommended that I need psychological help. Others assumed I didn't need it because I could converse well, I sounded fine. Matt explained the difference between counselling which is more talk-based, which is different from psychological help which is focused more on behaviour change.

- Gamblers Anonymous
  - o Going to GA was successful for helping me acknowledge that I have a problem – I go there now for the fellowship as much as anything.
- Outside view
  - o It was someone taking an interest from an outsider's point of view, in this case it was a lifecoach. Everyone in my life knew that I gambled – but they didn't know the severity of the issue. It took someone not as close to me to help me see the issue. Gambling just came up in the conversation.
- GamCare Scotland
  - o Provide a list of supports and describe them so people can determine what works for them.
- Awareness raising:
  - o A regular person talking about gambling harm – for example, a young person who can talk about this issue clearly, reduce the stigma. The more people who speak up, the more people will come forward.
- Role models:
  - o People who have turned it around.

### **Enablers of change:**

- There is an appetite for change in Parliament – quite comforting to know that the people who can make change are focused on this issue.
- The banks are getting involved in gambling blocks – more banks are involved than a year ago.
- Media attention has been high on the gambling harms issue – although not a fan of the Daily Mail, they have had a focus on this issue. This is spreading attention and bringing light to an issue that many people don't know is an issue.
- Hope and encouragement comes from a clear statement stating that 'this is a problem and people are affected by it and you might not even know that you are affected by it' – that can be very profound.
- Being able to tell your story – which requires the ability to understand your own story. To have a story that I can find myself in. To know that there is a story around these issues – it can involve housing, debt, all these issues.
- Being able to join online support – which were not available and not possible pre-Covid.
- Realising it's not all my own fault – realising that the gambling machines, etc. are designed to be addictive. Realising that the adverts are designed to glamourise gambling, and trigger gambling behaviour. Realising that the system is designed to enable gambling. Understanding that this is psychological warfare – against much bigger forces than me.
- These programmes – the ALLIANCE – give hope. There are people like us who are pushing these issues and ideas. Right here, right now is the hope for the future. It's about it being public.
- Tone – not telling us that we're all messed up, talk about the system and the way it enables addiction. Not giving trite advice ('turn off the laptop').
- Mental health/Addictions perspective – I couldn't get over the gambling addiction until I realised the mental side of it – it was understanding how my brain was functioning. Understand this as an addiction, like alcohol or tobacco.

- Talking about the severity of the issue and the harm it does, including to friends and families – mostly hidden from view.

### **Where to go to see the third horizon in the present?**

- Matt Gaskell clinic
- Netherlands – advertisements about gambling harm in the casino magazine
- Gambling Therapy Line
- Gordon Moody Association
- Gamblers Anonymous
- Milngavie vs Coatbridge – to see how the latter is so obviously different and set up as an environment to encourage gambling. This is a class issue too. And take a tour online as well – there it's a massacre

### **Ideas for change:**

- GPs need to be aware of the problem and have resources / a toolkit which they can draw on to support people.
- A Scottish Gambling Clinic – we need our own Matt Gaskells.
- A Scottish directory listing resources and where people can go for help.
- I need to be able to find and talk to other people like me. Younger people. Somewhere to reach out to for help.

### **What do we hope for?**

- I want to look back in ten years (less?) and see that people are looking at the way things are now and asking 'what were they all thinking!'
- Want this issue to be like Tobacco – heavily regulated, not glamorous, no advertising, shared public concern and public health action.
- My hope is that I'm in a far better place than I was two years ago – I'm not in a place mentally to be hopeful about the next two months, or two years .... But what I do want is education and prevention – ahead of people starting to gamble, not as a solution afterwards. I want the 'eureka moment' to happen before the gambling, not after.
- I hope to see this taken seriously, including by the NHS. We have fallen – I want to make sure others don't fall over the cliff edge. And for those that do, I want people there to help them.

### **Concerns:**

- Lack of awareness. It is difficult to find people to talk to people about this – e.g. NHS Highland has no services. There is no support for family members from Gamblers Anonymous. The more rural we get, the more hidden it is. Not many people know the scale of the problem. This is profound and life-changing, including for friends and family.
- It is the nature of this addiction that we suffer in silence. It is something you do on your own. Solo. In silence. It takes you from the inside. Society doesn't see it. Often even we cannot see, or will not see it, in ourselves. At some level, although we hide it, we want to get caught.
- Lack of promotion of services: Gamblers Anonymous don't advertise.
- Power differences: 'We're a nobody, especially in Scotland' – compared to the industry.
- Lack of specific support from the health service. GPs don't notice, they don't ask about gambling, they don't know what to do when it is raised. I went to

my GP and posed a hypothetical question about what he'd do if I presented with a gambling issue – and he said that he didn't know.

- Lack of tailored support in third sector: Programmes don't address the specific issue of gambling – or don't do it with the kinds of support that help. I have had years of psychological help and support around other issues, e.g. Women's Aid, and so on – but I'm shocked at how affected I am.
- Overwhelmed about the scale of the problem: Feel overwhelmed and confused – it's a personal problem – but it's how to channel that to address the global issues.
- Lack of interest in the NHS. We are invisible. We do not show up as a cost to the NHS so they are not interested. If we were addicted to alcohol and OD'd we would end up in hospital. Same with other addictions. If you are addicted to gambling and OD you commit suicide. No cost to anyone.

### **Observations from Graham at the close:**

- We have heard appeals for *quantity*: we have this but we need more.
- We have also heard appeals for *quality*: we have this but it is not as good as it could be, it needs to be more relevant, better informed, more human, better quality relationships and so on.
- We have heard appeals for new things, things that are not happening at the moment, or not happening in Scotland. We need the Lived Experience Forum to put their attention to that question – can we come up with a longer list of what would really help, wherever we see it in the world? It is easier to grow the future from what is already there than to start from scratch.
- It is striking how hidden the problem is, even from ourselves. This is solo, silent, it takes you from the inside. That present a deep challenge for all of us – to think about how to bring this into the light at both a society and an individual/family level.

### **Close**

Will brought the conversation to a close shortly before 20.00. He confirmed that he would circulate the Terms of Reference for the Forum and also this report of the evening session (including a revised Three Horizons map, incorporating any further reflections submitted after the event: see appendix).

He thanked all participants and asked for final reflections:

- We're on the same page. These are all great platforms and we've got to make the most of them to take these points to the policy makers;
- I'm more likely to speak up when everyone listens with respect – and it feels like that. I'm quite happy to give my time because it feels like the issue is being taken seriously and Will you've done a great job of making this professional;
- I feel listened to and can listen – that mutual respect;
- The last session I struggled with – the mutual respect there for everyone. We're all unique – but we have a shared journey and what we want to see happen for the future. It was really good to hear what everyone wants to achieve. Really good groundwork;
- Nice to see everybody. Great to be part of a group that seems to have a plan. Even seeing the Three Horizons laid out. I'm pleased to be on board;

- Great to be in the conversation. Huge respect for all of you. We have a plan – the Three Horizons also gives us agency. There are plans that we can wait for – and there are things that we are doing now, that we can do now. There is resource in this community.

Will wished everyone a good evening – noting that we had finished just in time to watch the Great British Bake-off.

Graham Leicester  
International Futures Forum

Catherine-Rose Stocks-Rankin  
Matter of Focus

Will Griffiths  
The ALLIANCE

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