



Scotland Reducing Gambling Harm

Year 3 Report

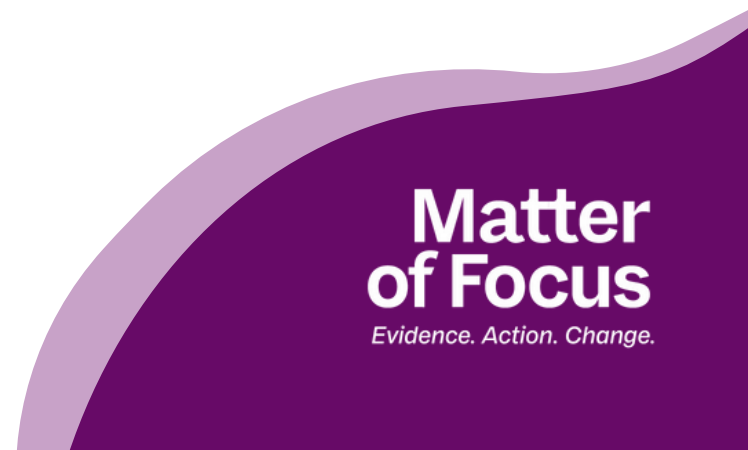
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Matter of Focus
April 2023



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HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE
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**SCOTLAND
REDUCING
Gambling Harm**



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Evidence. Action. Change.

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Foreword

When the ALLIANCE initially proposed this ambitious three year programme of work we recognised that gambling harms was a stigmatised and hidden harm which did not have the public awareness or prevention and treatment support which was urgently required to prevent more people experiencing the worst impact.

As we reflect on the past three years, I am reassured by the evidence set out in this evaluation that the work we have co-produced with members of the lived experience Forum has contributed to a growing community of individuals and organisations who are willing to commit time and effort to reducing gambling harms.

Nevertheless, the many challenges facing Scotland's population health cannot be overstated and this continues to have an impact on the extent to which gambling harms as a public health issue is prioritised by policy makers at UK or Scottish Government levels.

Despite these challenges, the work which has been led by the lived experience Forum has set strong foundations for future impact and contribution to a wider movement towards social change. At times we have been taken aback by the scale of hiddenness of this harm and acutely aware of the gambling industry's dominance in setting the public narratives of gambling as an individual responsibility to manage. In light of over ten years of working in the context of health and social care, the ALLIANCE is all too aware of the tendency to overlook and underplay the unfairly distributed social and commercial determinants of health and wellbeing which are avoidable.

The Forum members have continued to bravely and sensitively draw upon their experiences to demonstrate that recovery is possible but to also grow awareness across society.

There remains a very long way to go in building and spreading this sense of urgency so that the need to address gambling harms is more universally accepted and that policy change is not contingent upon good relations between small numbers of committed people.

Sara Redmond
Chief Officer of Development
Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE)

Summary

Background

‘Gambling harms’ describe a wide range of diverse negative impacts from gambling on the health and wellbeing of individuals, families, communities and society. The 2019 National Strategy to Reduce Gambling Harms sets out the importance of involving people with lived experience. The ALLIANCE responded to this with a proposal to establish a programme, established in 2020, to engage and embed the voices of people with lived experience in the implementation of this strategy.

Approach to the evaluation

This final year evaluation was conducted using the Matter of Focus approach and Matter of Focus software OutNav. This practical and robust, theory-based approach to evaluation is informed by contribution analysis and supports organisations to develop a clear understanding of:

- The theory of change underpinning their approach
- The data and evidence required to assess programme progress
- The contribution of the programme to intended outcomes
- What more can be done.

Matter of Focus worked with the ALLIANCE team in 2020 through a series of workshops to develop an outcome map and evaluation plan for the work, which has been revised and updated based on learning from years 1 and 2. The two pathways of this outcome map show how the ALLIANCE staff team worked to build and develop a forum for people with lived experience of gambling harms, and the impact this has had on wider stakeholders including policy and decision makers. The ALLIANCE team then gathered and analysed data, feedback and evidence throughout the duration of the programme, using OutNav. The analysis presented in this report draws on this data, evidence and initial analysis, and has been carried out by the Matter of Focus team.

Findings

The Scotland Reducing Gambling Harms outcome map consists of two pathways which each set out the theory of change for progress towards outcomes. ALLIANCE staff and the Forum undertook a range of activities across both

pathways throughout the three years of the programme and in this report their findings are presented as distinct change mechanisms.

Building the Forum

Drawing on their existing expertise in engaging people with lived experience in policy influence, the ALLIANCE facilitated the development and coordinated the growth of a unique and co-produced Forum on gambling harms. Forum members recruited throughout the life of the programme have worked with ALLIANCE staff to set out their priorities for change and have taken up a range of opportunities to engage with consultation on policy and practice and also spread awareness of the impact of gambling harms. This Forum has created a safe and welcoming environment for members to work together and gain access to new opportunities for involvement. The Forum acts as a focal point for the emerging wider gambling harms movement within Scotland.

Influencing others

Through its extensive networks, the ALLIANCE have given a platform to the priorities of Forum members and have shared these findings with a wide range of stakeholders. This wide reach has raised awareness of gambling harms and its impacts amongst professionals working across sectors, and there is evidence that this work is galvanising professionals in this space alongside people with lived experience to form a wider movement for change. This work has resulted in some emerging developments in policy and practice; however, the ALLIANCE and Forum members acknowledge the complexity and slow pace of this type of influencing work. This is particularly complex for Forum priorities relating to regulations and a preventative approach.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Scotland Reducing Gambling Harms Forum makes a unique contribution to community building and programme development which is distinct from simpler involvement or consultation. There is good evidence that such groups, networks and fora can lead to significant and long-term social impact. This report sets out evidence of the energy and enthusiasm which needs to be harnessed but also needs carefully nurtured by a supportive facilitator. Achieving the type of societal change that the programme seeks is complex and long term. To more fully realise that change, we believe there is good evidence to inform a refreshed and renewed approach to this work, focussing more strongly on community building and networking. Lived experience must continue to be at its heart to help ensure that

the societal pressure to reduce gambling harms is harder to resist for decision makers.

Recommendations

Based on our findings we make the following recommendations.

- That funds be sought for the continuation of the Scotland Reducing Gambling Harm Programme by the ALLIANCE involving people with lived experience of gambling harms and the ALLIANCE providing infrastructure support.
- That any future development be focused more strongly on building a network and movement for change in Scotland by extending Forum membership, ensuring its diversity and generally broadening the conversation. This may require less of a pronounced focus on policy influence while this change movement is further developed.
- To ensure the Forum is responding to a rapidly changing context and the interests of new members, it should regularly review its priorities and practices.
- The ALLIANCE should explore creating more formal opportunities for skills and capacity building across its work with people with lived experience, ensuring they are made available to Forum members.
- That learning from the first three years of the programme and its evaluation be shared widely to help build a developing movement for change.
- That evaluation and continuous learning and its dissemination remain core to the programme with underpinning change theories revised in line with recommendations from this evaluation.

Background

About this work

Gambling harms have been defined as "the adverse impacts from gambling on the health and wellbeing of individuals, families, communities and society. These harms impact on people's resources, relationships and health."¹ In 2019, the Gambling Commission launched the new National Strategy to Reduce Gambling Harms which emphasised prevention and early intervention as well as treatment and support. This was welcomed by The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) who responded to a call from the Gambling Commission with a proposal to put lived experience at the heart of efforts to implement Reducing Gambling Harms work in Scotland. The Scotland Reducing Gambling Harm Programme was established in February 2020 to work over three years with partners to accelerate the National Strategy to Reduce Gambling Harms. Its original aims were:

- Ensure that work relating to the implementation of the new strategy has a strong emphasis on co-producing this work with people with lived experience, alongside wider sector partners
- Adopt a strong public health approach that recognises the broader consideration of the determinants of gambling related harm
- Embed the voices of families, frontline staff and those with lived experience of gambling related harms into the implementation process
- Maintain engagement with people with lived experience over the long term, throughout the implementation of the strategy
- Active collaboration and sharing of emergent practice and learning with the Welsh and English Implementation Forums, and across the Great Britain Forums including research and academia
- Contribute to the development of the scope and terms of reference for the Scottish Implementation Group
- Ensure full stakeholder participation.

The ALLIANCE is the national third sector intermediary for a range of health and social care organisations. The ALLIANCE is a strategic partner of the Scottish Government and has close working relationships, several of which are

¹ The Gambling Commission, 2020

underpinned by Memorandum of Understanding, with many national NHS Boards, academic institutions and key organisations spanning health, social care, housing and digital technology. Its vision is for a Scotland where all people have a strong voice and enjoy their right to live well.

Matter of Focus is the evaluation partner for this programme. We have worked alongside ALLIANCE staff, lived experience Forum members and other stakeholders to ensure that the Scotland Reducing Gambling Harms programme is underpinned by the best possible evidence at every stage and that we build continuously on programme learning. This is the third and final evaluation report for this programme. It is based on year three of the programme and builds on two previous interim reports.

Prior learning

The first interim evaluation report was produced in January 2021. It reported on progress in developing the outcome map at that point. It included a context analysis and findings from analysis of eight interviews conducted by Matter of Focus. Based on the findings at that time it was agreed to prioritise three areas which were the focus of the second interim report:

- Ensure the lived experience voice informs decision-making
- Strengthen and broaden lived experience engagement
- Raise awareness of a public health approach to gambling harm.

The second interim report was published in July 2022. It described an ambitious programme of development work that sought to frame the societal challenge of gambling harm as a public health issue by putting the lived experience of people affected at its core. Despite challenges, the programme team had been able to flex their approach, both to the interests and wishes of Forum members and to the changing socio-political context for the work.

It was clear that access to decision makers had been less than had been anticipated at the outset. It was also clear that the programme team had invested a considerable amount of time and capacity in developing the Forum, recruiting members and in creating a safe space for their inclusion. The evaluation and evidence base indicates that such work takes time and is a pre-requisite for lived experience-led change and influence programmes.

At that stage it was agreed that the outcome map which underpinned the evaluation be refined in light of learning. We also recommended that the team improve the data used to assess outcomes.

The wider context for the programme

Matter of Focus met with members of the Scotland Reducing Gambling Harm Forum in November 2022 to improve and update our understanding of the context for this work. Specifically, we reviewed the individual, material and social factors which they believed helped or hindered the programme and the Forum in achieving agreed outcomes. This section summarises Forum members' views on the shifting context for the programme.

The overall theme of the discussion was that gambling harms were complex. Definitions are not always clear in this work, and 'gambling harm' and 'problem gambling' describe a broad spectrum of behaviours, impacts, and ripple effects. Harm not only applies to individuals but also to their families and wider communities in ways that are often unpredictable. At the most severe end of this spectrum, harms include the loss of life, and deep and lasting negative impacts on health, employment and financial status. As with other complex public health issues, there are no simple solutions. A range of things need to happen for people at different parts of the harm spectrum, and solutions are required for the individual, for the wider family and for the wider community around them.

Forum members were clear that stigma continues to be a significant challenge affecting individuals and families. Across society there is a lack of awareness of gambling harms, and of the silent crisis affecting a large number of people. By focusing instead on the result of gambling issues – the harms caused, including criminality – this reinforces stigma and feelings of shame, keeping issues hidden.

Solutions proposed to help individuals tackle their own gambling were described as ineffective and easy to get around. These are largely based around self-exclusion and are 'opt-in' measures; however, Forum members highlighted that advances in technology mean there are simple ways for people to bypass them. More effective solutions would require more coordinated and higher-level action – for example, more direct intervention between banks and the gambling industry.

People described feeling up against an industry employing sophisticated technologies to attract people to engage with gambling. There was a feeling that it is impossible to escape this influence as it affects all arenas of life, with increased online access through mobile phones exacerbating the problem.

Routes to help are available in the community; however, help is often difficult to find at the point where people first try to engage. Messages about support are not available in public spaces such as libraries and GPs in the same way that other crisis issues are addressed.

An emerging recovery community

Forum members described what they saw as a growing recovery community, supported by people with lived experience and organisations in the third sector. This provided hope to people at the beginning of recovery and contributed to a growing movement of grassroots campaigning. Social media has helped people to connect and to access resources which are difficult to find offline. Despite stigma, more people are hearing and understanding the message that "this isn't all your own fault."

This movement and community is growing, and the Forum gives this focus and a place to pull together in the same direction. However, there is a lack of cohesion in the recovery community. The Forum highlighted how the complexity of the issue can lead to disagreements and tensions between those involved, making it difficult to act as a single movement. This is reinforced by the scarcity of funding for work in this field creating competition between organisations involved rather than collaboration. Despite the challenges, there is appetite and ambition to make a difference and people are increasingly trying to take action.

Making a difference at the policy level – an uneven playing field

Overall, the Forum highlighted that a huge challenge to progress was the inequality of power between the growing community and the gambling industry in relation to resources and access to influencing decision makers. The gambling industry has a power and scope that a grassroots movement and the third sector cannot match. The Gambling Commission is to some extent an attempt to balance this; however, Forum members questioned the fairness of the way that it distributes funding and takes decisions about research.

There is a gap in the data about the true picture of problem gambling across society; this is compounded by the stigma individuals face which keeps issues hidden. The gambling industry can use privacy legislation as a way to dismiss attempts to understand the true extent of the levels of problem gambling across society. Without the clarity of the scale and impact of gambling harms it is more difficult to make calls for action.

Potential solutions to gambling harms are needed at all levels of society and therefore no single area of government is solely responsible. This means that

policy influencing is complicated and frustrating. There are levels of responsibility at Westminster, the Scottish Government and within Local Authorities. Forum members described what they saw as a lack of commitment at both Westminster and the Scottish Government level. The Forum reflected that gambling harms was a 'hot topic' issue in policy for a period of time; however, this appears to have passed and at present this attention and importance, and the resources to tackle the issue, have shifted to other areas.

Methodological Approach

This is the third and final evaluation report for this programme. As such, it draws on evidence gathered and reported in the previous interim reports. For this final report we also sought to achieve a number of specific aims. These were:

1. To review year 3 progress against the revised outcome map and pathways, which were developed based on learning from the evaluation in years 1 and 2.
2. To explore the unique and distinct contribution of the Forum when compared with similar mechanisms to involve people with lived experience of gambling harms elsewhere.
3. Based on learning across the three year evaluation, to make evidence-based recommendations to the ALLIANCE and the Gambling Commission on how to build on this work and ensure the future sustainability of the Forum.

In addition to drawing on the interim reports as evidence, we used the following sources of evidence for this report:

- Routine data collected by the programme team and added to OutNav.
- A context mapping session with members of the Forum.
- Two expert informant interviews with members of the programme team in the ALLIANCE.
- An evidence review on social change and recovery movements developed by Matter of Focus, with particular reference to aim two above.

The work shown in this report has been carried out using the Matter of Focus approach. The Matter of Focus approach is a theory-based approach to outcome monitoring and evaluation, learning and improvement that builds on contribution analysis. In using the approach, we have gone through a logical and structured process of:

- Developing a theory of change for the programme, informed by an understanding of its context.
- Agreeing an outcome map that show how we think activities contribute to outcomes, and what needs to be in place to make this happen.
- Identifying clear change mechanisms by which the programme works; these are shown in pathways.
- Developing a plan to gather data to understand whether or not we are making the progress towards outcomes we envisaged. This includes integrating current data and information we collect, as well as capturing data specifically for this purpose.
- Systematically reviewing this data against each of the stepping stones for each pathway in the outcome map.
- Summarising key findings against each of the stepping stones to tell our contribution story.

Scotland Reducing Gambling Harms outcome map






Our pathways

1. Building the Forum


2. Influencing others

Risks and assumptions

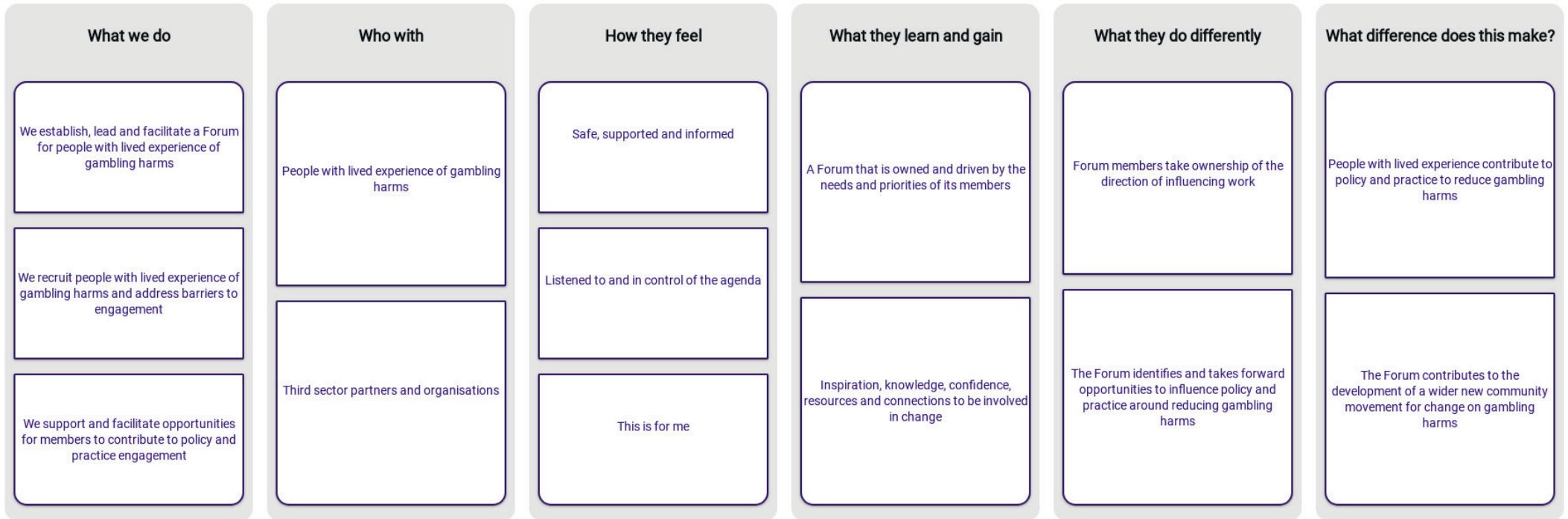
RISKS

-  Gambling Harms policy and practice operates at many levels of Government which makes engagement complex
-  Engaging in lived experience work requires time and emotional efforts which can be hard to sustain over long periods of time
-  People affected by Gambling Harms face stigma which makes it difficult to speak out about their experiences

ASSUMPTIONS

-  Institutions recognise the value of the voices of lived experience

1. Building the Forum - pathway progress



1. Building the Forum - summary findings

What we do

In the three years of this programme, the ALLIANCE have formed a lived experience group in which members are able to go beyond feeding their views into wider consultation work. The Scotland Reducing Gambling Harm Forum (the Forum) involves members in decision making from the ground up, with a wide remit which is defined and controlled by its members. It therefore creates an opportunity for engagement and policy influence which did not previously exist and remains the only one of its type in Scotland. The ALLIANCE's role in the Forum is to act as facilitator, using its expertise in supporting collaborative working with communities and extensive networks to create the conditions for the Forum to exist.

In the first year of the programme, the ALLIANCE engaged widely with individuals and organisations to capture diverse experiences of people affected by gambling harms to develop common understandings and shape the direction of this work. This included a 'Three Horizons' mapping exercise and the development of the Forum's Theory of Change, using the Matter of Focus approach. This work enabled the Forum members to set and agree a set of five priorities which capture this shared vision.

Reducing Gambling Harm: Priorities

- **Challenge the normalisation of gambling**

Including reducing advertisements for gambling and changing the "safer gambling" narrative.

"Gambling is common ... the harm is hidden."

- **Introduce person-centred treatment and support options**

Including for people experiencing complex and acute harms and support for friends and especially close family of people experiencing gambling harm.

- **Destigmatised**

"The person doesn't always feel able to talk about it - but maybe we are not asking the right questions."

- **Increase regulation of online gambling**

- **Introduce a Statutory Levy**

All underpinned by a recognition of gambling as a public health issue.

The five priorities for the Scotland Reducing Gambling Harm Programme, developed with Forum members.

It was initially envisioned that once established, the Forum's key area of work would be to feed into a Scottish Implementation Group (SIG), in line with the Reducing Gambling Harm Strategy. Throughout the first year of this work it became clear that challenges with the development and progress of the SIG, also impacted by Covid-19, meant that in order to find opportunities to meaningfully engage in policy and practice influence, the Forum needed to adapt its approach to influencing decision makers. The programme of activity developed into years 2 and 3 of the Forum has instead involved pivoting to seek out and create new opportunities for engagement, some of which are opportunistic. Despite these challenges, the Forum has used its position as a focal point for expertise on gambling harms to bring together people with lived experience and professionals on streams of activity that align with the Strategy:

- **Education:** involvement in public awareness raising through sharing personal stories of gambling harms and recovery, engagement with key groups at risk of harms, and in research projects.
- **Prevention:** the Forum has engaged in consultation on the development and implementation of new or existing policies including the Gambling Act review, Financial Services guidelines, and COSLA review.
- **Treatment and Support:** consultation on work which seeks to better support people experiencing gambling harms, including the Gordon Moody Treatment Centre and GP Toolkit.

The development of a Multi-Agency Group on Gambling Harms in Glasgow has been a particular opportunity for the Forum to engage meaningfully, which was not foreseen at the outset of this work.

All pieces of consultation or engagement activity, whether identified by Forum members as action to be taken or by external opportunities that are presented, are chosen and framed by the Forum's five priorities. This has allowed for engagement across a range of policy and practice areas.



Forum meeting agendas are set with a focus topic aligning with these priorities, which often includes an invited presenter. This is followed by discussion amongst Forum members, the agreement of key messages and actions as well as next steps. The programme went well beyond its initial plan of three Forum meetings per year, with seven meetings facilitated in 2022 alone.

Recruitment of members to the Forum has developed in phases. In the first stages of this work, strategies to engage with people with lived experience were primarily formed around already established connections with third sector organisations working in the gambling harms and recovery spaces, as well as reaching out to people with lived experience of gambling harms on social media platforms, primarily Twitter. In years two and three, the ALLIANCE has used key learning from ongoing evaluation, engagement with third sector organisations, internal learning from ALLIANCE Lived Experience Networks and an Equalities Impact Assessment to develop and refine a more formal recruitment strategy. This has included a much wider and more targeted reach through existing ALLIANCE networks, social media, and targeted promotion including with Volunteer Scotland. This has proven to be a successful way of reaching new audiences. The ALLIANCE continue to develop and refresh the Forum's recruitment strategy based on learning, with plans for 2023 including:

- Paid social media advertisement.
- Snowball sampling method: Forum members recommend positions to people and organisations they already know.
- Increased partnership working with Glasgow GH Multi-Agency Group.
- Radio advertisement.
- Enhanced approach to targeting seldom heard communities.

Who with

Over the three years of this work, 17 people with lived experience of gambling harms have been active members of the Forum, with eight of these members being recruited from year 3 of the programme. Since its inception, the Forum has enabled members to have varying degrees of engagement, varying from light touch (receiving information and minutes about discussions) to more regular and active membership. An average of five Forum members attend each meeting across the year, with patterns for individual members varying according to their personal availability, interest and expertise in the specific topic area to be discussed.

Findings from the 2022 Interim report also indicated that there may be a natural end-point for membership where individuals feel that they have contributed all that they are able or willing to at that stage and wish to step back from the role.

Demographic data taken from year 2 suggests Forum members are largely male, white, heterosexual and between the ages of 26-45. Both Forum members and ALLIANCE staff have suggested that a lack of diversity may be a limitation for the Forum, and have undertaken a range of work in their commitment to engage a wider spectrum of voices and experiences moving forward. A key challenge to widening participation is the stigma people may experience or perceive being attached to gambling harms. Evidence suggests that this can act as a barrier, not only to help seeking, but also to self-identification as someone affected by gambling harms and any associated collective action.

ALLIANCE staff have engaged widely with organisations representing minority groups to better understand barriers and adapt and develop their recruitment processes. These have included discussions with organisations representing women, older people and minority ethnic communities, and stigma has been consistently identified as a barrier to engagement.

The ALLIANCE have continued to adapt and develop their recruitment processes to integrate learning about what works for reaching seldom-heard communities; however, it may be too early to see the results of this work, a potential limitation of three year funding.



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Gambling Harm

ALLIANCE staff have engaged widely with organisations representing minority groups to better understand barriers and adapt and develop their recruitment processes.

How they feel

The ALLIANCE's expertise in working collaboratively with lived experience communities has enabled Forum work to be grounded in good practice in relation to creating safe and supportive environments. Key principles for the Forum have been ensuring participants can retain anonymity and confidentiality wherever requested: for example, using an assumed name and keeping cameras off during calls. Pre and post-meetings are also arranged for Forum members as required to support engagement. This support is communicated to members from the start of the recruitment process.

Evidence presented in the year two interim report and additional data collected in year three consistently shows that these efforts to create a safe and welcoming space for members are working well. One Forum member explained their experience of this support in their 2023 Forum member survey response:

“There has been an opportunity for people to express how they are feeling and an element of 'checking-in' with one another. There has been a supportive feel to the communications from those involved in the project, and people don't feel pressured to attend if they wish to take a 'breather.' We all respect and understand that people in the Forum have experienced addiction and associated life challenges, and have looked out for each other. The support from the Alliance has been warm and engaging.”

- Forum member

Further responses to the member survey highlighted that people felt motivated to engage with the Forum for multiple reasons. Some raised a desire to contribute to change at an institutional level, and saw Forum membership as a vehicle to achieve this. Other members explained that they saw the Forum as an opportunity to share their personal example that recovery from gambling harms was possible, and that their experiences can be useful to others.

Benefits of becoming a Forum member are communicated clearly through website, social media, flyers and during introductory meetings, to support engagement and to contribute to a supportive environment.



A recruitment flyer for the Forum which articulates the benefits of joining.

“The Alliance have been pretty awesome since we all first got involved and the hope and respect given to the lived experience voice is forever part of our recovery, discovery and appreciated beyond words.”

- Forum member

What they learn and gain

That Forum members are in control and set the agenda is a key feature of why this work provides such a unique opportunity in the gambling harms space. In contrast to other engagement opportunities where agendas are often set by professionals, we have clear evidence, from year 3 and before, that this Forum seeks to operate in a co-produced structure, as articulated on the New Economic Foundation's Participation Ladder.



The New Economic Forum Participation Ladder. Image adapted by and sourced from IIRISS.org.uk

The ALLIANCE plays the role of facilitator for the Forum, endeavouring to give Forum members control in setting the agenda by applying its five priorities. These priorities also inform all key messages that ALLIANCE staff share with wider stakeholders. In response to a 2023 survey of Forum members, three members agreed or strongly agreed that 'Forum

members have control over the agenda and activities', with one further response neither agreeing or disagreeing. Members explained in their responses that they feel the structure of meetings ensures that pressures of external control or bias have not impacted on their discussions.

“Whilst the program managers facilitate an agenda, including discussion with potential stakeholders to attend the Forum meetings, my opinion is that Forum members ultimately have a significant degree of control, because it’s the Forum members input & discussion that shapes the group, and allows both the group to move forward, but then provides insight to the external parties that have attended that session.”

- Forum member survey response

As previously described, there are times when the Forum has responded to external opportunities for engagement that may not have a clear fit with its initial design or priorities. It is perhaps inevitable that there be some degree of opportunism in determining the agenda as new interests and opportunities emerge over time. It will be important for the ALLIANCE to build in processes to review its priorities so that they remain pertinent to shifting context while remaining grounded in lived experience.

One Forum member also reflected that whilst they agree that the Forum is in control of discussions, their control is limited by a seeming lack of response from decision makers. This tension between the ambitious vision for change and the practical realities and slow

speed of policy and practice influence has at times been a source of frustration for members eager to see change.

A Forum priority has been to address the lack of treatment options for people most seriously affected by gambling harms. Several members have benefited from residential services in England and want to see them made available in Scotland. Forum members have been able to provide unique insights to why the current situation is not conducive to long-term recovery. These insights have clearly informed the position of the wider gambling harms programme on treatment options and the necessity for more local, joined up solutions.

Throughout this programme, members who have engaged in the Forum have gained opportunities to develop skills in policy influence, media and communications work informally. They have also expanded their knowledge of gambling harms through exposure to the experiences of other members and to a wide range of research and organisations working in this space. Members have also built their skills in effectively communicating their experiences with support and encouragement from the Forum – a strong example of this being the One Last Spin documentary, developed by a Forum member with support from the ALLIANCE including a contribution to its funding.

Formal opportunities to develop Forum members' skills and capacity, for example training in relation to communications or policy influence, have been more limited than had been originally anticipated due to a lack of appetite from members and to external pressures. The ALLIANCE should now explore creating more formal opportunities for skills and capacity building across its work with people with lived experience and ensure they are made available to Forum members.



Excerpts from the filming of 'One Last Spin', a film about gambling harms developed by a Forum member with some support from the ALLIANCE

What they do differently

As described, the design of the Forum facilitates opportunities for people with lived experience of gambling harms to take action on policy and practice issues through a focused agenda led by the Forum's priorities and involvement of third parties who present and directly respond to member views. This can involve direct consultation within the meeting, but also enables members to take up opportunities outwith Forum meetings by connecting them with wider networks. In year three of this programme, members have engaged with nine consultation opportunities directly in Forum meetings. Once members have consulted on pieces of work, programme staff then follow up with members to update them on what actions have been taken because of their engagement.

Despite the initial challenges in taking forward work with the Scottish Implementation Group (SIG), in year 3, Forum members have been able to engage with a proposal from the SIG on lived experience involvement and help shape this development. At the Scottish Government level, members were able to share the Forum's priorities and ask questions of Scottish Government representatives through a Forum meeting.

Forum members have also taken up opportunities to engage with research on gambling harms. This has included sharing experiences through the Tackling Gambling Stigma project, which members were introduced to at a Forum meeting. Members have also helped shape research questions for an ALLIANCE survey which sought to explore young people's views on gambling and gaming.

In year 3, work at the Local Authority level has created a number of opportunities for engagement. This has included consultation with COSLA on their 'Gambling Harms and Compliance' project, and the development of the Glasgow Gambling Harms Action Plan and Systems Map with members of the multi-agency group. Professionals from Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership joined a Forum meeting to gain insights on best practice for how to engage people with lived experience on a creative opportunity for people in recovery.

Forum members also shared their views on the development of treatment and support options in Scotland by engaging in a roundtable discussion with Gordon Moody, treatment and support agency.

Connections made through the Forum have enabled some members to engage with wider opportunities to contribute to policy and practice outside of this programme. For example, one Forum member has joined a Public Health Scotland group to work on developing narratives on gambling harms, to enable more lived experience voices to be heard. Another member's connections with third sector organisations has enabled them to take up a peer support role in gambling harms. A member who had initially engaged

with the Forum in an activist capacity has now moved into a professional role in gambling harms work.

What difference does this make?

It is clear that the Scotland Reducing Gambling Harms Forum has created and facilitated opportunities for members to engage with policy and practice that did not previously exist. The work of programme staff and Forum members to pivot and seek out opportunities that sit outside of the initial programme plan, with its emphasis upon the SIG, has meant that despite these challenges the Forum has been able to make some meaningful progress towards the vision set out in the Reducing Gambling Harms Strategy.

It is also clear that there is a lot of work still to do in order to realise [the clear and defined priorities](#) of Forum members. This is particularly the case for the 'prevention' strategic priority. Forum members recognise the limitations of their ability to make significant change in this area and have identified a de-prioritisation of gambling harms at UK and Scottish Government level as the main barrier to progress in this area.

“In my opinion, given the significant limitations the Forum works with (awaiting white paper, lack of appetite from MSP's, control of gambling from the UK Government, other pressures on health & social care), I do not think the Forum could have done much more thus far to be able to influence.”

- Forum member

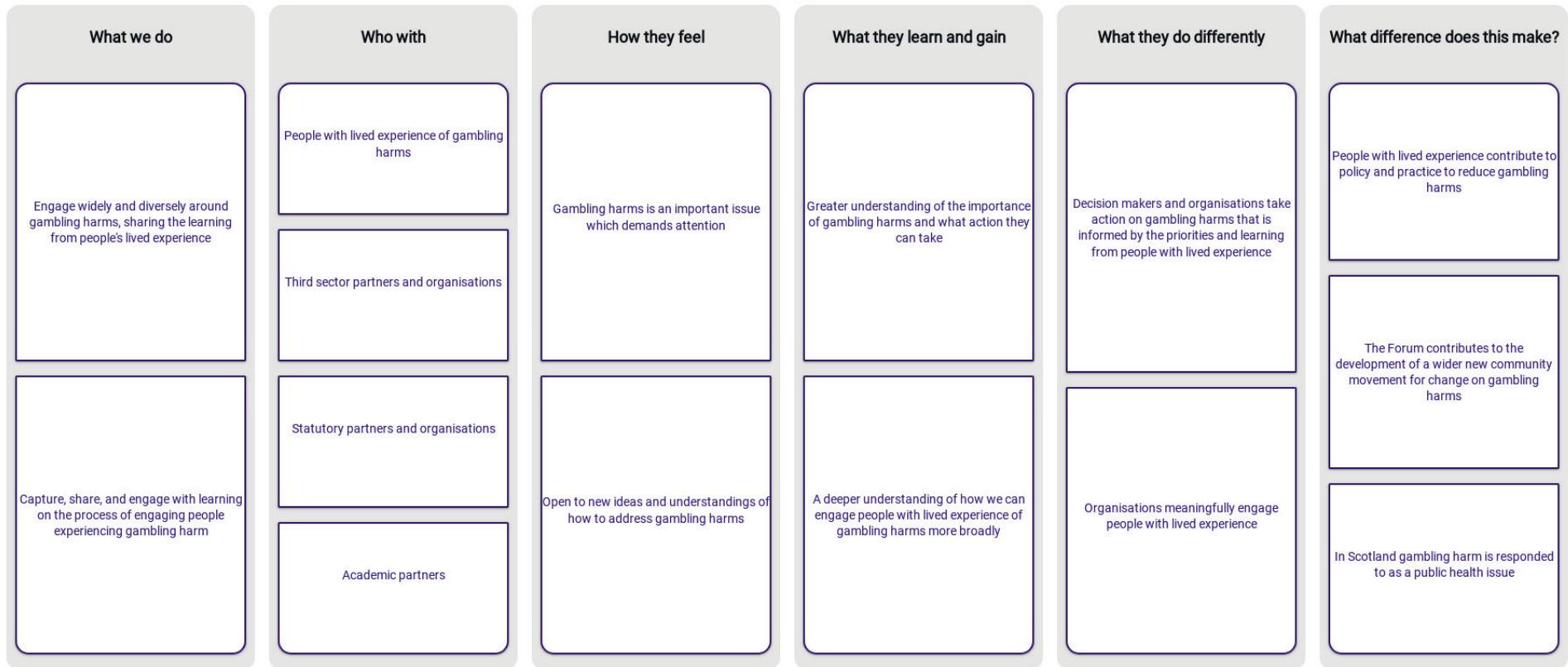
Despite these challenges, the work to date of the Forum has set some important foundations for future impact and contribution to a wider movement towards social change. In two surveys in January 2023, both Forum members and stakeholders reference the galvanising nature of the Forum, which should not be under-estimated. The Forum has and should continue to create a focal point in the gambling harms space, and bring people and organisations together in one place. Programme staff have also reflected that those members initially recruited in year 1 of this work were already reasonably connected with organisations. However, efforts to reach new audiences through their recruitment strategy has enabled them to draw in new voices. These are generally people who were previously less engaged and connected and who have greatly benefitted from these new opportunities.

“The SRGH team have been able to increasingly reach other parts of the third sector, this feeding back to those involved with the project and thus enhancing their contacts and networking. The project's close involvement with multi-agency work, particularly in Glasgow but elsewhere too, has enabled those involved with the project to become themselves involved with both third sector actors and statutory sectors such as Public Health Scotland. This has made a massive difference. People are heard and the issue has been brought to the forefront.”

- External stakeholder

Learning from our scoping review of evidence about social change and recovery movements suggests that support and facilitation are important conditions for success. Being driven by the voices of lived experience is key in the development of an authentic movement, but also gives reciprocal benefits to those engaged by sharing their own experiences to help others. Other successful movements have grown from a grassroots level by giving voice and representation to people with lived experience, which then drives an impetus for change through public awareness. This work requires support and time but the three years of this work to date place the Forum in a strong position to continue to build community and build a necessary sense of urgency to better address gambling harms.

2. Influencing others - pathway progress



2. Influencing others - summary findings

What we do

In addition to its role in facilitating the Gambling Harms Forum for people with lived experience, the ALLIANCE's other main function in this work is to utilise its profile and networks to provide a platform for lived experience to be heard and acted on across society and decision makers.

Across a range of platforms, programme staff present the key findings and priorities of Forum members to audiences with the intention of influencing policy and practice and raising awareness of gambling harms. Programme staff do this by sharing:

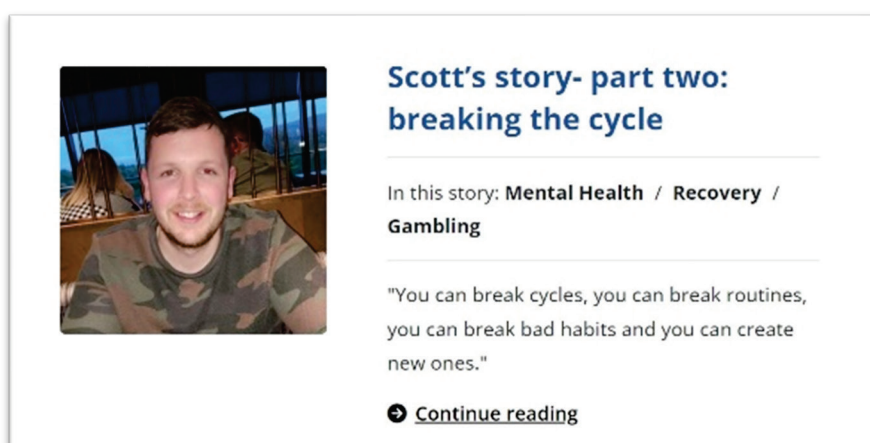
- Examples of gambling harm and their impact
- [The priorities of the Forum](#)
- What the Forum think needs to happen in the space
- Calls to action for wider stakeholders and policy makers.

In year 3, programme staff have delivered two learning events with Forum member involvement, a Young People's Gambling and Gaming Event in February 2022, and a screening of the One Last Spin documentary in June 2022.

Programme staff engage in, and have presented at, a quarterly Scottish Gambling Education Network, and have presented at the UK wide Public Policy Exchange Webinar. A Parliamentary breakfast for MSPs in December 2022 enabled programme staff

to present the Forum's key findings in a policy brief, with specific calls to action for decision makers, alongside members' stories of gambling harms and recovery,

which were collected as part of the wider Humans of Scotland series, hosted by the ALLIANCE. Programme staff have been able to work with colleagues in the ALLIANCE to raise awareness of gambling harms and recovery.



Scott's story- part two: breaking the cycle

In this story: **Mental Health / Recovery / Gambling**

"You can break cycles, you can break routines, you can break bad habits and you can create new ones."

[Continue reading](#)

Engagement with partner organisations across Scotland has had dual aims. Firstly, it has aided the programme's efforts to recruit new members and increase diversity by working closely with organisations who have connections with unrepresented groups. For example, good, mutually beneficial relations have been developed with Young Scot and the Scottish Women's Convention to inform and develop specific workstreams. Programme staff reported that some organisations they approached did not previously have a good understanding of the scale and impact of gambling harms on the communities they work with.

In addition to specific learning about gambling harms and policy influence, we saw that programme staff routinely reflect and learn about best practice in doing lived experience work through this programme. We understand that this learning is primarily shared internally with ALLIANCE colleagues working in similar lived experience panels and there is room to further disseminate this learning to wider communities, including those with a specific interest in gambling harms and recovery.

Who with

In year 3 of this work, the programme team have worked directly with seven third sector organisations. Joint working has largely focused on co-producing research on gambling harms with key groups in society (awareness and education), or in the development of resources to support people experiencing gambling harms (treatment and support).

Membership of the Glasgow Multi Agency Group on Gambling Harms has presented an opportunity to work with a range of organisations in both the third and public sector, including the Health and Social Care Partnership and Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector.

Programme staff have also worked with researchers at the University of Glasgow, to commission PhD studentship studying women's experiences of gambling harms. In doing so, they are actively contributing to a limited evidence base on gambling harms.

Programme staff reported having enjoyed a positive and constructive working relationship with a previous policy lead with responsibility for gambling harm in Scottish Government. However, following staff changes and an amalgamation of responsibilities, this has not been sustained in the latter part of the programme, hindering its influence. This is testament to a wider lack of prioritisation of

responding to gambling harms among policy makers, which is a significant barrier to achieving the impacts originally envisioned.

How they feel

The slow growth of a movement around gambling harms involving third sector organisations, people with lived experience, community groups and partners shows that within some sectors of society in Scotland there is a clear and shared understanding of the importance and urgency of this issue. However, there is still a very long way to go in building and spreading that sense of urgency so that a need to address gambling harms is agreed more universally and that policy change is not contingent upon good relations between small numbers of committed people.

Alongside the work of this programme, third sector organisations have invested in work to reduce gambling harms, including through Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector, who have distributed small funds to community groups and organisations. A number of the organisations who engaged with this programme and the Forum directly were motivated by an existing understanding of the importance of the issue. In our stakeholder survey, one respondent commented:

“My professional role is around seeking to work with others to mitigate the impact of wicked problems faced by individuals and communities which affects health and wellbeing, I got involved as a community survey back in 2007 highlighted GH as an issue but was not till I saw the Alliance work many years later there were partners to work with to take this forward.”

- Stakeholder Survey respondent.



Action to address gambling harms is spreading in Scotland's third sector, including the GCVS Gambling Harms Fund. Image: gcv.org.uk

In our survey of professionals engaged through this programme, all respondents strongly agreed that "Gambling harms is an important issue which demands attention." Commenting on why they held that view, a number of respondents highlighted the scale of the impact of gambling harms across society and the insufficient response to these harms that they perceive at a national and local level.

Evidence gathered from both a context analysis exercise with Forum members and in interviews with programme staff indicate that this view of the importance and urgency of gambling harms is not shared evenly across all areas of society. In particular, there is a more mixed picture at the levels of UK and Scottish Government, where the recognition of this issue is challenged by competing policy issues and priorities, including drugs and other public health harms. Both programme staff and Forum members have reflected that at times it has felt that gambling harms was rising 'up the agenda'; however, this has been fleeting and other public health issues, including the Covid-19 pandemic, have been prioritised and meant that it has dropped again out of prominence.

Amongst 'mainstream' third sector organisations and community groups – those not working directly with a focus on gambling harms – there is also a mixed understanding of its importance as an issue. Programme staff reflected that this has been particularly the case with some diversity groups that they have engaged through this work where there has been a lack of appetite to engage. It is unclear if this is due to the impact of stigma around gambling harms being particularly acute for seldom heard groups, and therefore presenting too high a barrier for engagement, or if it is due to a lack of recognition of this as an issue. Like Governments, these groups also face competing priorities for their work across a range of health and social issues.

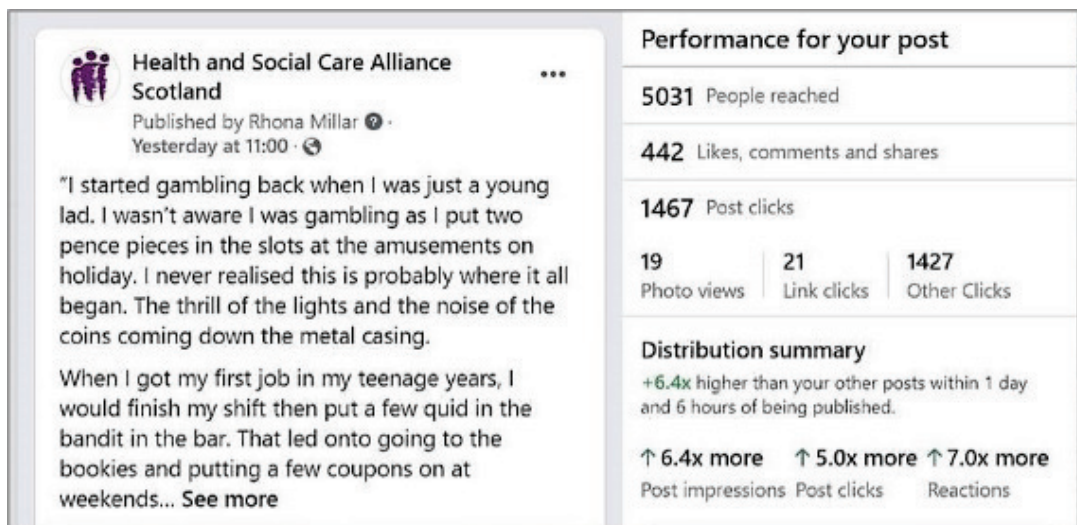
Programme staff and Forum members are also in agreement that at the level of the Gambling Industry itself there is a gap in recognition of the importance of gambling harms and requirement for action. Messaging from the industry at present focuses on harms as being an issue of individual responsibility, which sits at odds with the wider understanding of gambling harms being a public health issue. The challenges to raise awareness and influence attitudes at this level are significant.

Recognition of the value and importance of engaging people with lived experience in policy and practice development is now widespread. That this is recognised as a core principle within the Reducing Gambling Harms Strategy is, we believe, a key enabler for this work. Whilst lived experience is widely valued, the implications for what this means in reality are often less well understood. Perceived barriers by

decision makers and professionals to engaging with people with lived experience, including the time and planning this can involve, mean that there is a need for greater evidence of how to do this work well across social and health policy.

What they learn and gain

Education on the nature, extent, and impact of gambling harms on individuals with lived experience has been achieved by the programme through a wide range of engagement activities. Across all of these opportunities, the ability of this programme to use real experiences and Forum members' own words in spreading awareness has been a particularly powerful feature. This has included the more 'public' sharing of stories through the Humans of Scotland series, the One Last Spin Film through the ALLIANCE website and social media platforms to reach a wide audience.



Twitter analytics suggest that a tweet shared about Ross's story in the Humans of Scotland series reached a wide audience.

Evidence gathered from the more 'targeted' opportunities to raise awareness through events demonstrate how the voice of lived experience is particularly impactful:

“Very raw and real and an incredible effort by all to bring this together. Emotional and hard hitting but a brilliant way to get this message out and start a conversation.”

- Participant feedback from the digital launch of 'One Last Spin' at the ALLIANCE Conference June 2022.

“The stepping stone effect of gaming is a worry. My 12 year old nephew has already been in competitions for games he plays and see this as a status when he gets a good ranking.”

- Feedback from young people and gambling event at the ALLIANCE Digital Conference February 2022.

Direct work with third sector organisations has also created opportunities to spread awareness of gambling harms. As described in 'how they feel', some organisations engaged with this work were already motivated by an understanding of its importance. For others, however, particularly those who were approached because they have networks with under-represented groups, knowledge about gambling harms grew as a result of this engagement. One stakeholder survey respondent commented:

“I am the manager of the Scottish Women's Convention and we were asked to be involved via collaboration with the ALLIANCE to find out women's views on gambling harm. Upon completing the report we felt we had to highlight the stigma and discrimination with regards to women gambling and challenge the gender stereotypes of women and gambling.”

- Stakeholder Survey respondent.

Gains in understanding about what action can be taken next is a more nuanced picture. Programme staff share [the Forum's five priorities](#) widely when they engage in influencing work, which include a vision of what needs to change. As described in the context analysis for this work, the policy landscape on gambling harms is very complex, with levers for change being spread across a range of governmental levels. Action to address a 'prevention' agenda can therefore be unclear. There is evidence to suggest that actions that fall under 'treatment and

support' and 'education' are being addressed by professionals who engage with the programme. This includes sharing information with other networks, creating further opportunities for the conversation on gambling harms to spread, as well as personal actions individuals can take in discussing gambling with their families and friends. One professional indicated actions they could take to ensure that gambling harms was better understood in other services:

“Brilliant – makes me ashamed as despite working in mental health for many years I have never really asked anyone about whether they had any concerns about gambling even when there has been financial difficulties.”

- Participant feedback from the digital launch of 'One Last Spin' at the ALLIANCE Conference June 2022.

What they do differently

The five priorities identified by the Forum at its outset cover a wide spectrum of changes across different levels of society that broadly map on to the Reducing Gambling Harm Strategy.

Reducing Gambling Harm: Priorities

- **Challenge the normalisation of gambling**

Including reducing advertisements for gambling and changing the "safer gambling" narrative.
"Gambling is common ... the harm is hidden."

- **Introduce person-centred treatment and support options**

Including for people experiencing complex and acute harms and support for friends and especially close family of people experiencing gambling harm.

- **Destigmatisate**

"The person doesn't always feel able to talk about it - but maybe we are not asking the right questions."

- **Increase regulation of online gambling**

- **Introduce a Statutory Levy**

All underpinned by a recognition of gambling as a public health issue.

The five priorities for the Scotland Reducing Gambling Harm Programme, developed with Forum members.

Two of these priorities fall clearly under the 'prevention' lens of the Strategy:

- Increase regulation of online gambling, and
- Introduce a Statutory Levy.

In these two key areas, the barriers to change identified in the recent context analysis for this work are particularly relevant – that these actions would require action at both the UK and Scottish Government levels, and the lack of political appetite to make progress.

In the Forum's priority to "Introduce person centred treatment and support options" there is some evidence of progress. Work with a Glasgow Multi-Agency Forum has led to a commitment to a whole system approach to addressing gambling harms in the city, including the exploration of bringing gambling harms support into health centres in Glasgow through work with the Health and Social Care Partnership. Work with the Scottish Government around suicide prevention has also raised the possibility of further joint working to embed awareness of gambling harms, and related suicide risk, into this policy area. The Forum's consultation work with the Gordon Moody treatment centre has ensured that key issues around funding, referral pathways, travel, and the sustainability of treatment options are understood in the exploration of further treatment design.

In the Strategy's priority area of 'education' there is clearer evidence that professionals, organisations and decision makers are taking action based on the awareness raising activities of the programme. The Forum's two key priorities in this area are to:

- Challenge the normalisation of gambling, and
- Destigmatise.

Organisations already active in the gambling harms space have described how they have been able to be more effective due to the existence of the Forum. Providing a focal point for a wider and developing change movement has enabled connections to be made and new opportunities to be taken up. For example, COPE Scotland have developed new resources and social media activity on gambling harms and have integrated messaging on gambling into their existing resources. One Stakeholder Survey respondent, already working within gambling harms, explained how the programme has enabled them to work more effectively:

“ “This was work which was always needing to be done BUT its impact would have been slight, partnering with the ALLIANCE and others around addressing GH work offered a place to sit that work to help bring about change ... this is about collective action.”

- Stakeholder survey respondent

Organisations not previously working on gambling harms and engaged through this programme are demonstrating a continued commitment to spread awareness and continue learning beyond their initial involvement.

What difference does this make?

The programme's 'bridging' function – between people with lived experience of gambling harms and decision makers – has enabled the dissemination of key messages at a range of levels in society, reaching policy makers in Governments, Local Authorities and third sector organisations. Without the connections and resources in reaching decision makers that the ALLIANCE have brought to this programme it would have been much more difficult, and certainly slower, for Forum members to have their voices heard. There is evidence that the programme is widening the audience for Forum member priorities and experiences and is making good progress in the 'education' arm of this strategy.

An important assumption of this work has been that institutions and decision makers truly value the voices of people with lived experience, and this commitment was described in the Reducing Gambling Harms Strategy. Where this work does identify a gap, however, is in the translation between what people with lived experience identify as priorities for action into practical changes in policy and practice. Whilst the programme has not highlighted significant barriers to voices being heard, there have been challenges in the translation to action, particularly in the 'prevention' aim where legislation would be required. Evidence from other social change movements suggests that people with lived experience combining with community organisations and service providers can create fertile grounds for policy change. Such community building may in fact be a pre-requisite for the types of policy and practice change the programme ultimately aims for.

Outside of decision makers, this work has enabled stronger connections between organisations working in this space through information sharing and building relationships. A particular success has been the work with the Glasgow Multi-Agency Group which offers a blueprint for coordination in other parts of Scotland.

This contributes to the widening of a change movement by integrating third sector organisations and community groups. With complex social change there is obviously power in building a common voice.

“ I believe, especially that the project as a whole has had substantial achievements especially in view of the common difficulties and obstacles that face any such programmes. Our company itself would not have been able to make the progress it has without Scotland Reducing Gambling Harm.”

- Stakeholder survey respondent

The same respondent went on to explain that the programme plays an important role as a “*focal point*” for action and a place to build capacity for a growing but under-represented community of interest.

Conclusions and recommendations

We have good evidence that the programme team have successfully established and built the Forum and its activities over the three years, as described in the first pathway. We also have evidence that the Forum responds to and is led by members' interests and that it is a safe and supportive space from which people have been able to build wider connections and take action.

That this Forum exists at all as a “*focal point*” should not be taken for granted. The evidence we have reviewed shows that the Forum makes a unique contribution to community building and programme development which is distinct from simpler involvement or consultation (aim 2). We have no doubt that the work of the Forum can be described as co-produced, and hope we have been able to articulate its unique contribution.

In terms of the overall difference the Forum has made, the desire to influence decision makers has been hampered by several factors, but Forum members are realistic about how much can be achieved at present. We have seen a shift towards the Forum and its activities being characterised more as part of a movement than simply a means of direct influence. New projects have been supported and developed in line with member interests, and experiences have been shared widely to influence awareness and to challenge stigma. We think this shift is positive and may in fact be necessary in order to increase a needed sense of urgency to respond more fully to gambling harms.

There is good evidence that such groups, networks and fora can lead to significant and long-term social impact. However, it is also clear that successful change movements tend to have sound and values based organisational support, similar to that which we have seen in this programme. Wider evidence is also clear that the type of social change envisaged at the outset of this programme, most notably in relation to policy influence, takes time and is subject to continually adapting interests and priorities of decision makers.

The second pathway looked at how the overall programme, of which the Forum is one part, influenced others and encouraged change. We saw evidence that progress had been made by the ALLIANCE to increase awareness of gambling harms and some evidence for increased awareness. While there are laudable examples of impact in organisations and among decision makers of programme activities, most notably in Glasgow but also in relation to the inclusion of gambling harms in the suicide strategy, there is some way to go before the intended long term outcomes of the programme will be fully realised.

An underpinning assumption of the programme as it was originally envisaged was that decision makers would be open to learning from people with lived experience of

gambling harms. While we do not have evidence that this has not been the case, progress has been slow and subject not only to the complex spread of decision making responsibility across the UK but also to the short term interests of decision makers. Put simply, gambling harms has fallen down the priority list in the face of multiple emerging priorities, including the pandemic and cost of living crisis.

This degree of fragility in political will seems unlikely to change in the short term. In the face of this context, we believe that the best way to continue building towards sustainable change at a political and societal level is to continue the good work of Forum development and to extend efforts to build a thriving community and movement for change. Taking this approach could have multiple benefits including further building voice in a community which often feels stigmatised and disempowered, raising public awareness of gambling harms, and building a sense of urgency for change. It could also build new lived experience-led support and interventions for those affected as has been seen as a result of mental health and problem substance use recovery movements in Scotland. Our evidence review suggests building a successful movement for social change requires infrastructure support, and the ALLIANCE is uniquely placed to assume that role in Scotland.

The ALLIANCE are to be congratulated for building evaluation into the Scotland Reducing Gambling Harm programme from its outset. As a result, there has been continual learning, which has helped inform the adaptation of the programme. It is widely acknowledged that evaluating policy impact can be challenging and is best supported by theory-based approaches that recognise this complexity. For such approaches to work well, organisations need to invest in and prioritise routine data collection and cycles of analysis. At times, as evaluation partners, we have had insufficient breadth of data to fully test the outcome pathways, and we encourage the ALLIANCE to further embed routine data collection and evaluation moving forward.

In conclusion, progress has been made in the final year of this programme and indeed throughout its three years. We see energy and enthusiasm which needs to be harnessed but also needs carefully nurtured by a supportive facilitator. Achieving the type of societal change that the programme seeks is complex and long term. To more fully realise it, we believe there is good evidence to inform a refreshed and renewed approach to this work focussing more strongly on community building and networking. Lived experience must continue to be at its heart to help ensure that the societal pressure to reduce gambling harms is harder to resist for decision makers.

Recommendations

Based on our findings we make the following recommendations.

- That funds be sought for the continuation of the Scotland Reducing Gambling Harm Programme by the ALLIANCE, involving people with lived experience of gambling harms and the ALLIANCE providing infrastructure support.
- That any future development be focused more strongly on building a network and movement for change in Scotland by extending Forum membership, ensuring its diversity and generally broadening the conversation. This may require less of a pronounced focus on policy influence while this change movement is further developed.
- To ensure the Forum is responding to a rapidly changing context and the interests of new members, it should regularly review its priorities and practices.
- The ALLIANCE should explore creating more formal opportunities for skills and capacity building across its work with people with lived experience, ensuring they are made available to Forum members.
- That learning from the first three years of the programme and its evaluation be shared widely to help build a developing movement for change.
- That evaluation and continuous learning and its dissemination remain core to the programme, with underpinning change theories revised in line with recommendations from this evaluation.