Problem gambling and Social Work

1. Why is this relevant?
2. How to identify this ‘hidden’ problem
3. How to help
4. Signposting.
NOT A PROBLEM GAMBLER

PROBLEM GAMBLER

THE SAME ON THE OUTSIDE...
1-877-MY-LIMIT

BUT DIFFERENT ON THE INSIDE.
1-877-MY-LIMIT
Why is this relevant?

Problem gamblers in UK – 0.6 - 0.85% of population
(Connolly et al 2017 based on Health surveys of England and Scotland)

At risk gamblers in UK - *up to 2 million people have or are at risk of developing gambling problems*
(Gambling Commission 2017)
Figure 1: Levels of harm

- **Individual**
  - stress, depression, anxiety, MH issues
  - job loss
  - financial hardship
  - family and relationship issues
  - loss of social supports and community connections

- **Family, Friends**
  - family neglect, domestic violence, relationship breakdown
  - poverty
  - homelessness
  - stigma and social isolation

- **Workplaces, Clubs, Groups**
  - absenteeism
  - job loss
  - poor performance
  - theft
  - lower participation rates

- **Community**
  - reduced resources available
  - increased reliance on welfare supports
  - community disempowerment
  - loss of focus on core business for clubs that run venues
  - poverty

- **Society**
  - less employment created by spending in gambling industry compared to other areas
  - regressive tax
  - loss of confidence in government due to perceived conflict of interest
  - increased crime and associated costs

Source: Health promotion resource guide for problem gambling prevention in Melbourne: [Link](#)
Why is this relevant?

Problem gambling and debt -

Problem gambling and deprivation -

Problem gambling and intimate partner violence -

Problem gambling and families

Co-morbidities – substance misuse, mental health problems -
Problem gambling, and debt -

Average debt of problem gamblers
= £16,000 (National Problem Gambling Clinic)
= £17,500 (Gam care)
(compare average of £6000 for UK residents in 2017 - Moneysupermarket)

Valentine and Hughes (2010) - debt range -£2,000 to £144,000

Thomas (2009) -average self reported debt £62,676

It is of note that gambling-related debt on the part of perpetrators of financial abuse has been identified in a number of adult safeguarding investigations (O’Keeffe et al.2007).
Problem Gambling and Deprivation

Those living in the most deprived areas were three times more likely to report having a close relative with a gambling problem compared to those living in the least deprived areas (Orford 2011).

Links between area deprivation and volume of gambling and levels of problem gambling (Welte et al 2004 for USA and Orford 2010 and Carra et al 2017 for UK).

Relative and absolute deprivation.
Problem Gambling and ‘Domestic violence’ or ‘Intimate Partner Violence’ (IPV)

Meta-analyses revealed that over one third of problem gamblers report being victims of physical IPV (38.1%) or perpetrators (Dowling et al 2016)
Why is this relevant?

Problem gambling and families

‘it is unfortunate but likely that the children who grow up in problem gambling families will become an important area of concern for child health and social workers’ (Darbyshire, Oster, and Carrig 2001).
Children of problem gamblers

... reported feeling abandoned, rejected, neglected, emotionally deprived, angry, hurt, sad, confused, isolated and/or lonely, guilty, helpless, anxious and depressed

- They often suffered from stress related illnesses including asthma and allergies, headaches and stomach problems

- Inadequate stress management, poor coping skills and poor school performance were also reported among this population

- In addition, children of problem gamblers were more likely to gamble themselves at a younger age

- Lorenz and Shuttlesworth (1983) found that 25% of the children in their study had significant behavioural or adjustment problems, reflected in running away from home, committing crime and engaging in drug-, alcohol-, or gambling-related activities

(Problem Gambling and its Impact on Families: A Literature Review Kalischuk 2007)
Co-morbidities

A review of treatment seeking problem gamblers
(Dowling et al 2015)

highest mean prevalence of current psychiatric disorders was for nicotine dependence (56.4%)

major depressive disorder (29.9%)
alcohol use disorders (21.2%),
anxiety disorders (17.6%),
social phobia (14.9%),
post-traumatic stress disorder (12.3%)
Co-morbidities

cannabis use disorder (11.5%)  
attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (9.3%)  
adjustment disorder (9.2%)  
bipolar disorder (8.8%)  
obsessive-compulsive disorder (8.2%)
What to look for? What to ask?

Straightforward Screening Tools

1. The Lie/Bet Questionnaire:
   1. Have you ever had to lie to people important to you about how much you gambled?
   2. Have you ever felt the need to bet more and more money?

2. Gamcare screening tool: 16 statements


3. Gamblers Anonymous 20 Questions

   http://www.gamblersanonymous.org/ga/content/20-questions

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Brief Biosocial Gambling Screen (BBGS)

1. During the past 12 months, have you become restless, irritable or anxious when trying to stop/cut down on gambling?  
   - YES  
   - NO

2. During the past 12 months, have you tried to keep your family or friends from knowing how much you gambled?  
   - YES  
   - NO

3. During the past 12 months did you have such financial trouble as a result of your gambling that you had to get help with living expenses from family, friends or welfare?  
   - YES  
   - NO
What to look for?

Finance
Money missing from bank accounts, wallet/purse or money jar.
Household items and valuables missing.
Regularly short of money even though they earn a wage.
Having many loans at the one time.
Unpaid bills/disconnection notices.
Borrowing money on a regular basis
Being secretive about financial records or payslips
Lack of food in the house.

Mood and Behaviour
Becoming withdrawn from others/family events.
Controlling and/or manipulative behaviour.
Reporting feeling hopeless, depressed, frustrated or suicidal
Seeming worried, agitated or upset for no apparent reason.
Changes in personality - sleeping, eating, or sexual relationship patterns

Time
Spending more and more time gambling.
Often being late for commitments
Taking an unusual amount of time for simple tasks
Being secretive about unexplained absences
Taking a lot of sick days or days off
Specific Guidance for Social Workers?

Australian Association of social workers – position statement 2012.

Related Guidance:
http://www2.mmu.ac.uk/media/mmuacuk/content/documents/hpsc/research/Alcohol-and-other-drug-use-report.pdf

Plans for a project to develop similar guidance in relation to PG in the next year.
Professional Capabilities
How to help?

Recognition - few problem gamblers seek help, ambivalence is high, and feelings of guilt and shame are often strong.

Motivational interviewing -

‘Motivational interviewing, or MI, has become increasingly popular in social work in recent years. This is because its values and theory are consistent with core elements of social work and it provides new ways of understanding some of the key challenges. MI focuses on how to have difficult conversations and there is strong evidence for its effectiveness in helping people change problematic behaviours’ (Forrester 2016).

Signposting to specialist help - see below.
Signposting

Specialist :

1. Gamcare –

National Gambling Helpline 0808 8020 133, 8am to midnight, seven days a week.
(46,000 calls in 2015-16) and/or the Netline.

(If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you can access the helpline via a service called Next Generation Text Service. Find out more at http://ngts.org.uk/
Also, Telephone interpretation services are provided by Language Line.)

One to one counselling – offered via partner agencies with counsellors accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)

2. Gamblers Anonymous and GamAnon – 120 groups across the country
GamCare Counselling network

25 partner agencies covering much of the UK.

6,830 sessions offered in 2015/16
Signposting

National Problem Gambling Clinic

800 people per year


Gordon Moody Association

Residential, online and outreach services

18 beds providing a 12 week residential programme in West Midlands and London (in 2015/16 - 479 initial applicants - 52 successfully completed 12 week programme)

Half way house and relapse prevention support for 14 ex residents x 3 months
Online

GamCare – 1.5 million visitors in 2015/16

Interactive online help and web forum


2. Bigdeal website designed for young people.

- [https://www.bigdeal.org.uk/](https://www.bigdeal.org.uk/)
Gamblers Anonymous

https://www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk/
Practical Advice

CAB -

Debt advice - e.g https://www.stepchange.org/

A range of organisations now offering advice and help in relation to problem gambling.

YGAM (Young Gamblers Education Trust) -
http://www.ygam.org/

‘independent UK-Registered Charity with a social purpose to inform, educate and safeguard young people against problematic gambling or gaming’.

‘In 2016/17, almost 30,000 young people accessed our education programme and we worked with 348 organisations. For 2017/18, we are planning on reaching at least 100,000 young people’.

EPIC Risk Management

http://epicpgc.com/individual-support/

Working with prisons, sports bodies, and financial sector.

http://www.livingroom-cardiff.com/
References


Moineysupermarket (2017) United Kingdom of Credit


