

From: Clair Bell, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

Andrew Scott-Clark, Director of Public Health

To: Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee

24 September 2019

Subject: **Update on Kent County Council Approach to Gambling Addiction: Follow up from November 2018 paper on Gambling Addiction and Public Mental Health.**

Classification: Unrestricted

Previous Pathway: This is the first committee to consider this report

Future Pathway: Kent Substance Misuse Alliance

Electoral Division: All

Summary: In November 2018 the Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee asked for a briefing on the impact of problem gambling and its impact on public mental health. That paper proposed a number of actions to promote a public health approach to addiction and mental health and wellbeing. This paper updates on the previous report, gives a national update on NHS, licensing authority and public health roles and responsibilities to tackle gambling addiction. Given the scarce resources in the KCC public health budget and status as upper tier authority (rather than licensing authority), this paper proposes a joined-up approach to tackle this issue. It suggests the issue is best tackled via the Kent's strategic partnership approach to public mental health and working closely with its partner agencies in promoting the resources available for gambling addiction, advocating for responsible measures in tackling supply of gambling products and safeguarding vulnerable groups.

Recommendation: The Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee is asked to: **COMMENT on and ENDORSE** the contents of the report.

1.0 Background and Introduction

There are approximately 373,000 problem gamblers in England. To give a sense of the scale of the problem there are approximately 293,000 crack and opium addicts in England. However, there is no evidence that gambling alone leads to debt, mental illness, relationship breakdown and criminality. However, it is believed these issues are interrelated and are more prevalent in young males.

The supply of gambling outlets is the responsibility of the licensing authorities. The Gambling Commission is a national body that has been set up to support the Department of Culture, Media and Sport to ensure UK gambling is legal, fair

and does not exploit the vulnerable.

The gambling commission has briefed local councils on taking a public health approach to gambling and set out key recommendations to council public health teams. Kent County Council in 2018 endorsed the following approaches to tackling problem gambling:

- Strategically work with borough councils' licensing plans to challenge threats to vulnerable people
- Raise awareness by understanding gambling vulnerability via available data sources and promoting awareness in front line workers
- Strategically work with the NHS to improve access to available services for gambling addiction and debt.

2.0 Current Resources for Tackling Problem Gambling

- 2.1 During 2019 the NHS Long Term Plan for mental health has highlighted problem gambling and made the issue one of its 'must do's' for mental health. The national resources of NHS specialist clinics are being expanded, including one in Beckenham (South East London) in order to increase provision to those complex and vulnerable people in need. A new national resource for young people affected by problem gambling has been created. The range of treatments include psychological counselling, cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) and residential rehabilitation. There is also a national helpline (via GamCare), and there are currently 15 treatment organisations across Great Britain providing specialist counselling. The Gordon Moody Association offers 12-week residential care at centres in Dudley, West Midlands and Beckenham, Kent. The National Problem Gambling Clinic, based within the Addictions Service at Central North West London NHS Trust, offers CBT and psychiatric care and is also largely funded by GambleAware.
- 2.2 In the previous briefing it was highlighted that fewer than expected people were accessing the available services and that there were few waiting lists. It is important to work with the NHS and other statutory providers including social care and safeguarding to both highlight and refer to services.
- 2.3 GamCare developed a self-assessment and screening tool in 2019. The link is here: <https://www.gamcare.org.uk/self-help/self-assessment-tool/>
- 2.4 Licensing authorities are asked to provide a statement of principles under their duties to the Gambling Act and in 2019/20 public health in Kent will be working with the district councils to develop local area profiles for targeting issues linked with licensing and vulnerability. This will take place via the Kent Substance Misuse Alliance and involve trading standards where necessary.
- 2.5 Debt has been linked to increased mental health crisis and suicides. The Kent and Medway Suicide Prevention Strategy is conducting a deeper dive into the links between debt and suicidality and will publish findings in spring 2020.

3.0 Mental health, Addictions and Vulnerable people: Safeguarding and Multidisciplinary Working

3.1 There will be expanded care and support for young people aged 13 to 25 via NHS provision. Adult provision will also be increased via pledges in the Long-Term Plan for mental health.

3.2 This is a recent quote from Simon Stevens (NHS England's Chief Executive) "The links between problem gambling and stress, depression and mental health problems are growing and there are too many stories of lives lost and families destroyed. This action shows just how seriously the NHS takes the threat of gambling addiction, even in young people, but we need to be clear – tackling mental ill health caused by addiction is everyone's responsibility, especially those firms that directly contribute to the problem. This is an industry that splashes £1.5 billion on marketing and advertising campaigns, much of it now pumped out online and through social media, but it has been spending just a fraction of that helping customers and their families deal with the direct consequences of addiction.

"The sums just don't add up and that is why as well as voluntary action it makes sense to hold open the possibility of a mandatory levy if experience shows that's what's needed. A levy to fund evidence-based NHS treatment, research and education can substantially increase the money available, so that taxpayers and the NHS are not left to pick up a huge tab."

3.3 Those eligible for treatment will be people who have a history of complex untreated addiction to gambling, co-morbidities and multiple vulnerabilities, previous attempts at structured treatment, mental health problems, learning disabilities and adverse childhood experiences. It will be important to highlight these services to front line workers in all Kent commissioned services for vulnerable people and promote them to front line workers who work with vulnerable people. People who will be treated in multi-disciplinary teams via NHS Local Care services and can be assessed for addictions including gambling addictions.

3.4 It is proposed that an information sheet containing the new NHS services and referral criteria is shared with KCC social services and safeguarding teams, also NHS mental health commissioners and providers. It is also proposed that the new services are highlighted on available websites and via KCC Live Well and One You services for maximum coverage.

4.0 Advocacy and Leadership

4.1 As an upper tier Authority Kent County Council has the ability to work with local districts to understand more fully the needs of their local community. Areas of deprivation are at greatest risk. It is proposed that through local partnership working both members with special interest and local strategic partners are best placed to challenge local policies and practices to safeguard vulnerable people.

4.2 There is a national strategy tackling responsible gambling led by the gambling

association: <http://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/PDF/Strategy-2018-2021.pdf>

The Local Government Association is a strong advocate and strategic group that is able to gather expertise and best practice. Kent County Council members with special interest in this area might make valuable contribution to leading reviews of national and local policies via involvement in LGA safer and stronger communities network groups. However, the key decisions and training for licensing applications for regulation of gambling are with the Licensing Authority and close working with district authorities are needed. There may be a role for a Kent County Council member to lead KCC advocacy politically, both locally and nationally.

- 4.3 Problem Gambling is an emerging public health issue and currently the public health grant does not have resources to tackle this alone. However as an emerging threat to the public's health it is proposed that the Director of Public Health in Kent raise this issue with the Association of Directors of Public Health, Public Health England and the Faculty of Public Health to see if there are ways local networks can advocate for better collective action to policy makers if there is member support and championship for this.

5.0 Resources for Further Help

- 5.1 Advice for children and young people: The guidelines from the new national services are firstly to talk to your child about gambling, show children that you are willing to talk to them, give them the facts - ideally before they are exposed to the fantasy; seek professional support if your child has a serious problem, Increase opportunities for greater awareness and understanding and offer a connection with people who've been through similar experiences.

Places to seek help [NHS Choices - Gambling](#) [GamCare](#) [Gamblers Anonymous \(UK\)](#) [Gam Anon](#) Action on Addiction [No Panic](#) [National Debtline](#) [Families Anonymous](#)

6.0 Conclusion and Next Steps

- 6.1 This paper outlines key steps to promoting the issues of problem gambling in Kent. These include a summary sheet and briefing of available resources for vulnerable people to be disseminated to front line staff dealing with vulnerable groups. Also, the public health team in Kent can spread the information on the new NHS gambling treatment resources to key front line workers and via key KCC websites, including NHS local care groups.
- 6.2 A paper outlining new addiction services should be taken to the new Kent Substance Misuse Alliance and the existing Tobacco Control Alliance for comment and support.
- 6.3 As no local data is available currently to assess the need, public health will explore the opportunities and challenges of what specific data is available and can be combined with other datasets (in anonymised form) for population health analyses for problem gambling.

- 6.4 A key role of KCC is also to support and protect vulnerable groups and communities from the impact of problem gambling. This will be tackled via public health action with licensing authorities delivered via the Kent Substance Misuse Strategy in 2020. Tackling debt and deprivation will also be a key approach to preventing vulnerable people's exposure to harm from gambling. The suicide prevention strategy will report on debt and mental health in early 2020.
- 6.5 It is proposed that the Cabinet Member for Public Health works with local and national policy makers in advocating responsible legislation and strategy with support from the Director of Public Health and their team.

7.0 Summary: In November 2018 the Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee asked for a briefing on the impact of problem gambling and its impact on public mental health. That paper proposed a number of actions to promote a public health approach to addiction and mental health and wellbeing. This paper updates on the previous report, gives a national update on the roles and responsibilities that the NHS, licensing authority and public health could have in tackling gambling addiction. Given the scarce resources in the KCC public health budget and status as upper tier authority (rather than licensing authority), this paper proposes a joined-up approach to tackle this issue. It suggests the issue is best tackled via the Kent's strategic partnership approach to public mental health and working closely with its partner agencies in promoting the resources available for gambling addiction, advocating for responsible measures in tackling supply of gambling products and safeguarding vulnerable groups.

Recommendation

The Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee is asked to:
COMMENT on and ENDORSE the contents of the report

8.0 Contact Details

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