

Problem Gambling in Leeds - Briefing Note of the Financial Inclusion Team

Introduction

It was agreed at Executive Board March 2014, and in accordance with the Large Casino's licensing agreement, that a portion of the Social Inclusion Fund (SIF) is to be used on projects that mitigate problem gambling. This briefing note provides an update on the work being undertaken to improve support for gambling related harm across Leeds.

Research into the prevalence of problem gambling

In April 2016 the Council commissioned a team from Leeds Beckett University (LBU), to conduct a study into the prevalence of problem gambling in Leeds. The aim was to ensure that the Council is in an informed position to discuss the needs of those struggling with problem gambling, and that support services are resourced and targeted towards those most in need.

The study evaluated the national data on problem gambling and concluded that there could be in the region of 10,000 problem gamblers in Leeds with a further 30,000 people who might be at risk of harm from their gambling behaviour. There can also be impacts on immediate family members. This is a relatively small proportion of the estimated 67% of the UK population who participate in some form of gambling. However, national data indicates that fewer than 3% of problem gamblers actually come forward for help and support.

The final research was launched in early 2017, and disseminated at a national conference held in the city in March 2017.

Funding for Support

Support for problem gambling and gambling related harm is currently nationally funded via a voluntary levy on the gambling industry. GambleAware distributes the funding from the industry on education, prevention and treatment services and commissions research to broaden public understanding of gambling-related harm.

GamCare is commissioned by GambleAware and is the national provider of information, advice, support and free counselling for the prevention and treatment of problem gambling. They operate the National Gambling Helpline, provide treatment for problem gamblers and their families, create awareness about responsible gambling and treatment, and encourage an effective approach to responsible gambling within the gambling industry.

NECA (North East Council for Addictions) is the local specialist counselling provider for Leeds on behalf of GamCare. NECA is a regional provider of specialist face to face advice and counselling services related to gambling related harm and problem gamblers. They have just the one counsellor providing support in Leeds.

For the most severe cases of gambling addiction, which requires clinical support, clients are referred to the National Problem Gambling Clinic. This is based in London, funded by GambleAware.

Problem Gambling Project Group

The research highlighted key areas in which the Council and partners can work together to help mitigate gambling related harm in Leeds. This would require an integrated approach between the Council, advice partners and the Gambling Industry to raise awareness of how to recognise, help, signpost and support those suffering from or at risk of gambling related harm. In order to progress this work, the Problem Gambling Project Group was established which brought together the local problem gambling counselling service, partners from the gambling industry, third sector advice agencies and a cross section of departments from the Council.

Actions for Support

Discussions with the group have led to the following work areas which are currently in progress:

- A marketing and communications campaign

Compared to other similar social issues, problem gambling does not have a very high profile and the availability of support services is not generally well known. The industry promotes services within its own establishments but this message does not get out to the general population in any respect. This results in a lack of open discussion on the subject.

The Leeds problem gambling campaign uses the slogan 'Beat the Odds' and strap line 'talk gambling Leeds'. The aim of the campaign message is to reduce the stigma and encourage people to talk about gambling and seek support. It was launched on the 16th of October to coincide with National Responsible Gambling week which was organised by the industry. The local campaign will be ongoing and refreshed as appropriate. The 'Beat the Odds' campaign is visible in council buildings, health and care settings, advice centres and other community venues across the city.

Printed material includes; pull up banners, posters, postcards, and business cards. The campaign also includes advertising on; bus stops, buses, pubs, garage forecourts, mobile phones, social media. An accompanying animation is also being displayed on screens in hospitals, Millennium square and community hubs.

The web link which features on the advertising is www.talkgamblingleeds.org.uk and this re-directs the public to the Council's Money Information Centre (MIC) website, which signposts people to relevant support and information. In the absence of a local helpline and very limited specialist provision in Leeds, the campaign encourages people to contact the national GamCare phone number and website which offers 'chat' support and peer support forums.

- Frontline Training

As the research found, advice and support for problem gamblers is limited in Leeds. A problem gambler in Leeds can currently access national support online or over the telephone via GamCare or local face to face counselling.

In order to integrate with the current national and local support provision, work has begun to train frontline staff on how to spot signs of people at risk of gambling related harm and offer brief intervention and signposting services. This will allow a referral flow of clients between Leeds advice network and problem gambling support, so that each party can help the client according to their area of expertise.

- Increasing support for problem gambling

Currently, severe cases of gambling addiction, which requires clinical support are referred to the National Problem Gambling Clinic. This is the only clinic in the UK and is based in London, funded by GambleAware.

GambleAware has an ambition to open more clinics regionally, and are currently considering how this can be achieved.