

Glasgow Whole System Approach Gambling Harms Project Update (February 2021)

Michelle Gillies, Scottish Public Health Network

Background

A multi-agency group in Glasgow are working toward adopting a whole system approach to addressing gambling harms in the City. The 3-year project received modest funding through a regulatory settlement authorised by the UK Gambling Commission. Led by the Scottish Public Health Network with support from senior leaders across the City Council family, NHS, third sector and academia, the project will support delivery of the National Strategy to Reduce Gambling Harms in Scotland and our National Public Health Priorities by contributing to an emergent evidence base around systems thinking and working. Strategic partners, the Health and Social Care Alliance (the ALLIANCE) are leading engagement with and involvement of people and communities with lived experience of gambling harms.

Progress

The project started in January 2020. The initial months focused on establishing senior level support, governance arrangements, through the Community Planning Partnership's Public Health Oversight Board, an Advisory Board and priority working groups. Policies on declarations of interest and principles for engaging industry stakeholders were agreed.

An ambitious programme of meaningful engagement with local people and communities and the services that work with and for them was planned to build a shared understanding of gambling harms and find local solutions. However, as the COVID-19 pandemic evolved, this became impossible to deliver; many staff in partner agencies were furloughed or redeployed to work on the direct COVID response.

In May 2020 we undertook a short electronic survey of local frontline services in the third and statutory services to help us understand what they were seeing in relation to gambling harms and how we could better support them. The response rate was low (n=15); we suspect, reflecting our comms reach but also limited interest and capacity during the active COVID response, in an issue that did not have a significant profile in the City pre-COVID.

In June 2020 a stakeholder mapping exercise was carried out to inform a multi-agency communication plan. A map of relevant local and national strategy and policy was undertaken. An action mapping exercise is ongoing to understand key actions being taken by partners to directly or indirectly address gambling harms. Analysis of available treatment data began. A scoping exercise began of local and national data intelligence. Recognising limited local data and a clear gap in national metrics to understand, measure and monitor gambling harms, we hosted a national roundtable discussion in December 2020 with representation from across the devolved nations, the Gambling Commission and ABSG. The aim was to build interest, capacity and agency to adopt a strategic approach to public health surveillance of gambling harms.

In August 2020 our first virtual engagement event with people with lived experience was hosted by the ALLIANCE from which some key themes began to emerge particularly around access to help, support and treatment. In December 2020 the HSCP hosted a roundtable discussion with a wide range of partners from across whole system to discuss pathways to help, support and treatment for people experiencing gambling problems.

Given the ongoing difficulties in directly engaging with local communities and frontline services across the system at the current time, we have strategically prioritised engagement through existing networks in key areas: financial inclusion, poverty, inequalities, suicide prevention mental health, addictions, housing and homelessness, gender-based violence, justice settings, children and young people. Where possible we are adopting an action research approach, having short, small conversation, reflecting back, iterating, to create a picture of the problem and local solutions. Forthcoming events include a virtual seminar with Community Justice Glasgow on 11 February 2021 and a webinar with our Suicide Prevention Partnership on 26 February 2021 at which Gambling with Lives will speak. These events are key to raising awareness of gambling harms with colleagues working in other policy areas and encourage them to bring their voice, knowledge and skills to actions to the range of actions required across the whole system to address gambling harms. The ALLIANCE continue to undertake a range of targeted engagement exercises with local people with lived experience to inform our work.

Future plans

Over the next six months we aim to build a system map that will be used to identify key leverage points in the system. With partners Glasgow City Council, we will host a Gambling Harms Summit in Summer/Autumn 2021 to share our learning and co-create a local action plan that reflects local needs, preferences and priorities. We have identified an opportunity to collaborate with GREO, international experts in gambling research and knowledge transfer, to evaluate the whole system project, with an aim of building capacity within the local system.