

GambleAware

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PRESS STATEMENT

Problem gamblers cost the UK Government up to £1.2 billion per year

London, Tuesday 13th December: The true cost of problem gambling is revealed today in a new report commissioned by GambleAware. The study, completed by the IPPR, estimates that problem gamblers cost the government between £260 million and £1.2 billion per year.

The research highlights which parts of Government absorb the worst of the costs of gambling related harm, these are:

In health:

- hospital inpatient services (£140 million–£610 million)
- mental health primary care (£10–£40 million)
- secondary mental health services (£30 million–£110 million)

In welfare and employment:

- JSA claimant costs and lost labour tax receipts (£40 million–£160 million)

In housing

- statutory homelessness applications (£10 million–£60 million)

In criminal justice

- incarcerations (£40 million–£190 million)

Despite the significant costs associated with these people, only 0.4 to 1.1 per cent of the adult population are considered problem gamblers.

Certain environmental or social factors such as unemployment or mental health issues often play a significant role too. Demographics including certain ages, genders, and incomes all show correlations between the likelihood of someone developing a gambling problem. For instance;

- those who are aged 16-24 are the least likely to gamble, but, within that age bracket, those who do, are more likely to be problem gamblers
- men are five times more likely to develop a problem than women
- those who are in the lowest income bracket are less likely to gamble than those in the highest but more likely to have develop a problem, and
- gambling prevalence is higher in those who are unemployed, homeless, black and Asian.

Marc Etches, CEO of GambleAware has said:

“Problem gambling is an issue which affects millions of people across Britain each day. We’re working hard to raise awareness of the issue and to help people see the true cost of gambling addiction. GambleAware is keen to put problem gambling on the public health agenda, as it’s no different to any other kind of addiction. It’s our job to raise awareness of the issue and to let people know that there is help available. We fund treatment centres

across the UK and urge anyone who thinks they or a loved one has a problem to get in touch, or call our national gambling helpline for free, confidential advice”

Craig Thorley, research fellow, from IPPR, says:

“For many, problem gambling is a hidden addiction. IPPR’s research shows the scale of the challenge for Britain’s public services for the first time.

“This should be a wakeup call to government. We need a proper strategy to deal with this issue, just like we’ve had for other public health issues such as alcoholism.

“This strategy must make sure that effective services are available to help those affected, and also consider whether we have the right regulations and prevention strategies in place to stop those at risk of problem gambling from being pulled over the edge.”

Dr Simon Tanner, former Director of Public Health for London and member of the Responsible Gambling Strategy Board, says:

“The costing of alcohol-related harm five years ago was a powerful tool in stimulating a collaborative public health approach to tackling this serious problem. I hope that this report kick starts the conversation about gambling-related harm in the same way. Whilst not a full cost benefit analysis, these conservative estimates of fiscal expenditure help to make the case for a more joined up, collaborative response.”

Dr Henrietta Bowden-Jones, Director and Lead Clinician at the Central and North West London (CNWL) NHS National Problem Gambling Clinic, said:

“The health costs highlighted here are a significant call to action. There are no NICE guidelines for problem gambling and low awareness amongst the wider public health community of screening tools and treatment services, so I think calling this a “hidden addiction” is justified.

"Problem Gambling is an addiction and as such needs to be considered with the same level of evidence base we apply to other medical illnesses. We would like to see more NHS involvement to support the work GambleAware are doing in providing adequate national treatment to problem gamblers.”

Paul Buck, Chief Executive, EPIC Risk Management who are working in partnership with Sodexo Justice Services and GambleAware to deliver a pilot across the Criminal Justice System, said:

"Problem gamblers are more than four times more likely to be in prison than the average member of the population. One in ten male prisoners are estimated to be problem gamblers. Some end up in prison because they stole to fund their gambling, whilst others develop significant gambling problems whilst imprisoned due to the unique environment with high levels of boredom, stress and peer pressure. This new IPPR report quantifies the cost of problem gambling to the criminal justice system for the first time. If we don't address the need for gambling screening, education and rehabilitation amongst those in the criminal justice system these costs will remain just the tip of the iceberg, leaving some of the most vulnerable at risk of reoffending, serious mental health issues and suicide."

-ENDS-

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NOTES

- If you or someone you know is worried about gambling, we provide free advice & counselling – visit www.GambleAware.org or call the National Gambling Helpline 0808 8020 133
- The Responsible Gambling Trust operating as Gamble**Aware** is the leading charity in the UK committed to minimising gambling-related harm. As an independent national charity funded by donations from the gambling industry, Gamble**Aware** funds education, prevention and treatment services and commissions research to broaden public understanding of gambling-related harm. The aim is to stop people getting into problems with their gambling, and ensure that those that do develop problems receive fast and effective treatment and support. Click here to find out more: <http://about.gambleaware.org/>
- Gamble**Aware** aims to raise a minimum of £10million each year in voluntary contributions from the gambling industry operating in Great Britain. This donation based system was proposed under the Gambling Act 2005 and is prescribed by the Gambling Commission in its Licence Conditions and Codes of Practice.
- Gamble**Aware's** programme of treatment, education, harm prevention and research are guided by the National Responsible Gambling Strategy, which is defined by the independent Responsible Gambling Strategy Board (RGSB) and endorsed by the Gambling Commission. The RGSB, the Gambling Commission and Gamble**Aware** work together under the terms of an agreement in place since 2012: <http://about.gambleaware.org/media/1216/statementofintent.pdf>. Research is conducted under the terms of a 'Research Commissioning and Governance Procedure' agreed in 2016 by the RGSB, the Gambling Commission and Gamble**Aware**: <http://about.gambleaware.org/media/1270/research-commissioning-and-governance-procedure-may-2016-final.pdf>.
- IPPR aims to influence policy in the present and reinvent progressive politics in the future, and is dedicated to the better country that Britain can be through progressive policy and politics. With nearly 60 staff across four offices throughout the UK, IPPR is Britain's only national think tank with a truly national presence.
- The full report is available online <http://about.gambleaware.org/research/research-publications/>