
Scrutiny Inquiry Panel - Reducing Gambling-Related Harms in Southampton
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 December 2024

Present: Councillors Cooper (Chair), Greenhalgh, Percival and Webb (Vice-Chair)

Apologies: Councillors Powell-Vaughan

4. **Apologies and Changes in Membership (if any)**

The apologies of Councillor Powell-Vaughan were noted.

5. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting (including matters arising)**

RESOLVED: that the minutes for the Panel meeting on 14 November 2024 be approved and signed as a correct record.

6. **A whole-place approach to reducing gambling related harms**

The Panel noted the report of the Scrutiny Manager and considered the information provided by the invited guests which would be used as evidence in the review.

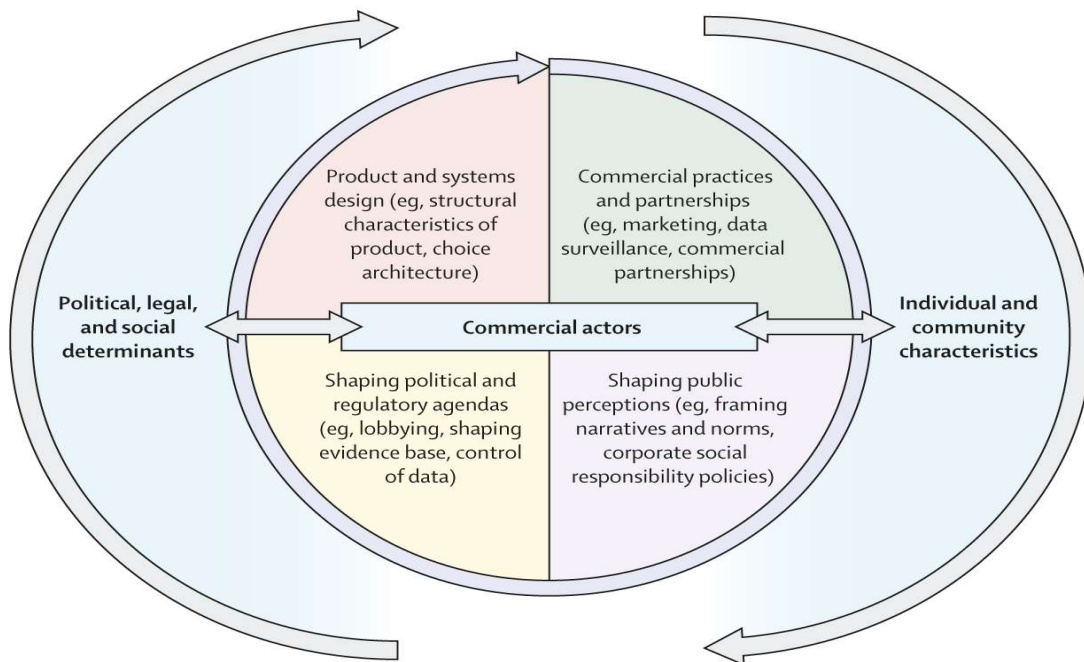
Summary of information provided:

1) Gambling harms - a whole system based approach to preventing harms – Professor Heather Wardle, Professor of Gambling Research and Policy at the University of Glasgow.

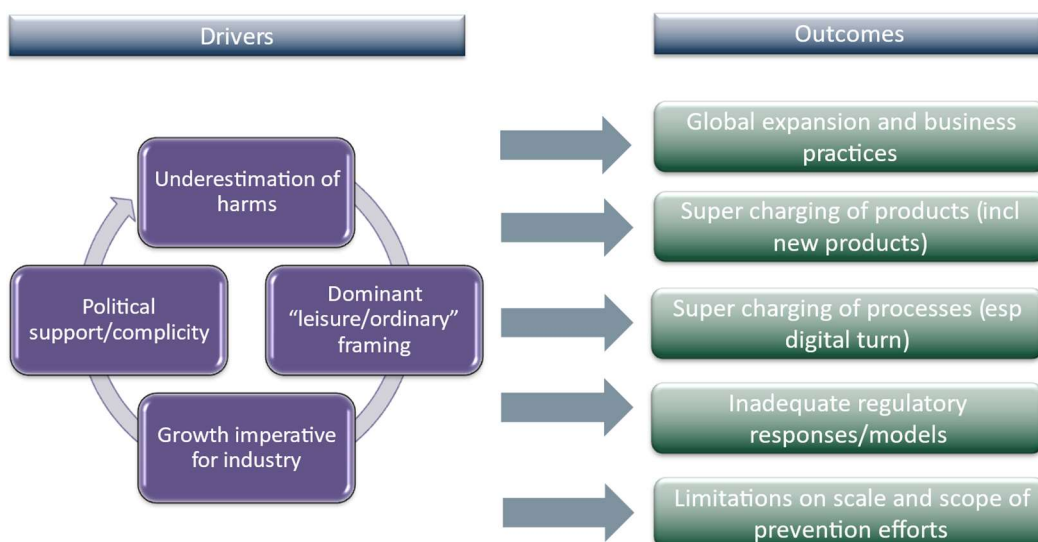
- A presentation was delivered by Professor Heather Wardle, outlining the importance of implementing a whole system based approach to preventing gambling harms.

Key points raised in the presentation included:

- Determinants of gambling and gambling harms:

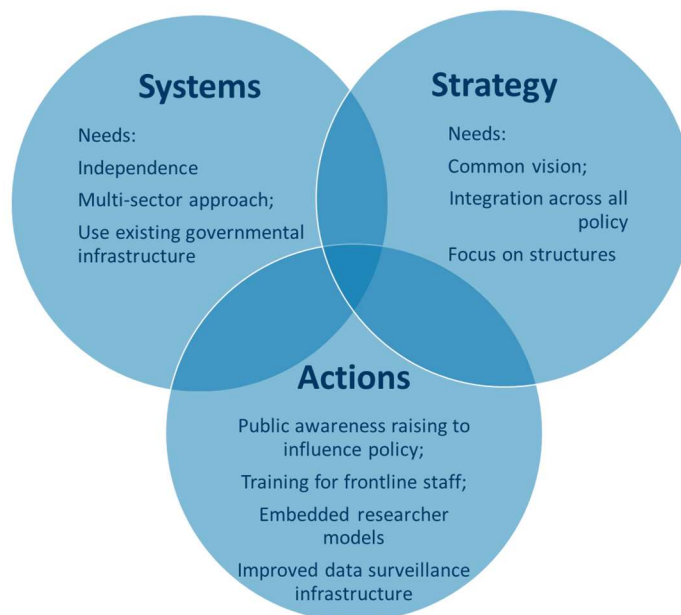


- Systematic reframing of gambling as leisure and allowing industry to use same practices for promotion and marketing as other leisure commodities – despite it being health harming. Estimate that between 1% - 5% of people in nations globally experience gambling disorder and many more experience harms; especially including affected others – you can experience harms from gambling without being a disordered gambler – relates to the nature of the product and the experience.
- Harms paradox evidence – those from certain socio-economic or demographic backgrounds are far less likely to gamble but those that do are more likely to experience harm – potential role of gambling accelerating and exacerbating inequalities and thus is a threat to sustainable development goals more generally – this is specifically related to how the global and corporate gambling industry is developing and political actions (or inactions in some cases) in response to this.

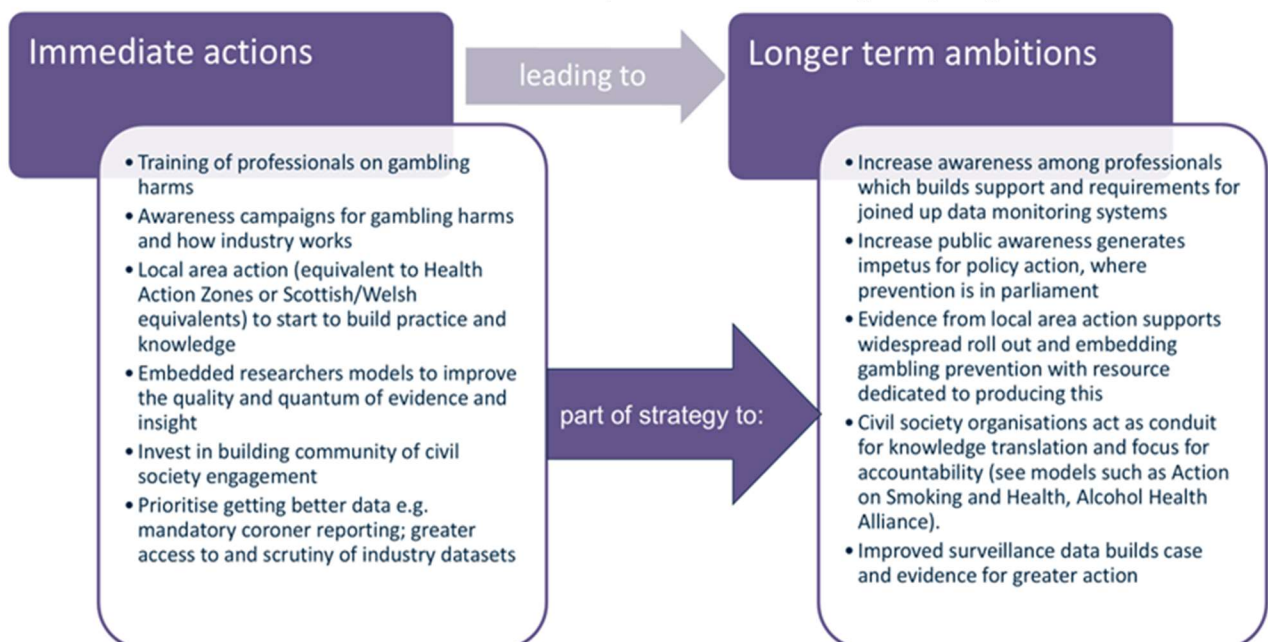


- This has implications for prevention – It needs a whole systems approach to reduce harm; it needs different regulatory approaches; It needs global co-operation.

- A whole systems approach is required because gambling harms impact so many areas including – Crime, work and employment, cultural, financial, relationships, mental and physical health. It therefore needs a multi-sectoral response.
- Gambling harms have a direct impact on areas that local government is responsible for addressing – Poverty, health and wellbeing, gender equality, economic growth, inequalities and community safety. Those who are most vulnerable to gambling harms are also more likely to be in contact with or receiving support from councils.
- There is widespread recognition that the current policy environment is not optimal for a fully realised public health prevention strategy. However, it was also recognised that there is an opportunity to start building towards this ambition, using the statutory levy on gambling operators to implement stronger, robust and independent systems and to start work in some priority actions areas whilst a more comprehensive and commonly-held Prevention Strategy is developed.
- Key features of the system proposed:



- Actions needed now to deliver better systems and strategies going forward –



- Concluding remarks:

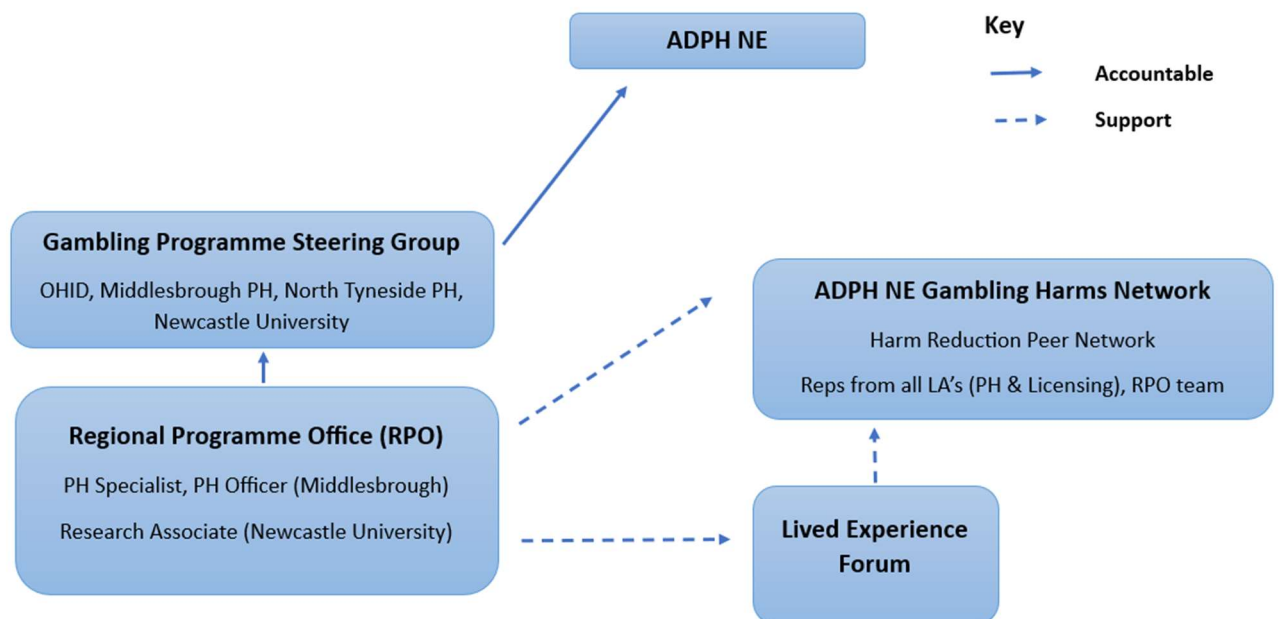
- Instituting effective prevention may require wholesale reframing of the way gambling is considered.
- Needs a systems-based approach, and recognition of taking action across the whole system; a multi-sectoral approach.
- Regional and local-level co-ordinated action is possible and it is possible to make in-roads in the immediate term.

2) North East Gambling Harms Programme – Alice Beadle, Public Health Specialist for Gambling Related Harms working across the North East of England

- Alice Beadle delivered a presentation introducing the work being undertaken in the north east of England addressing gambling harms.

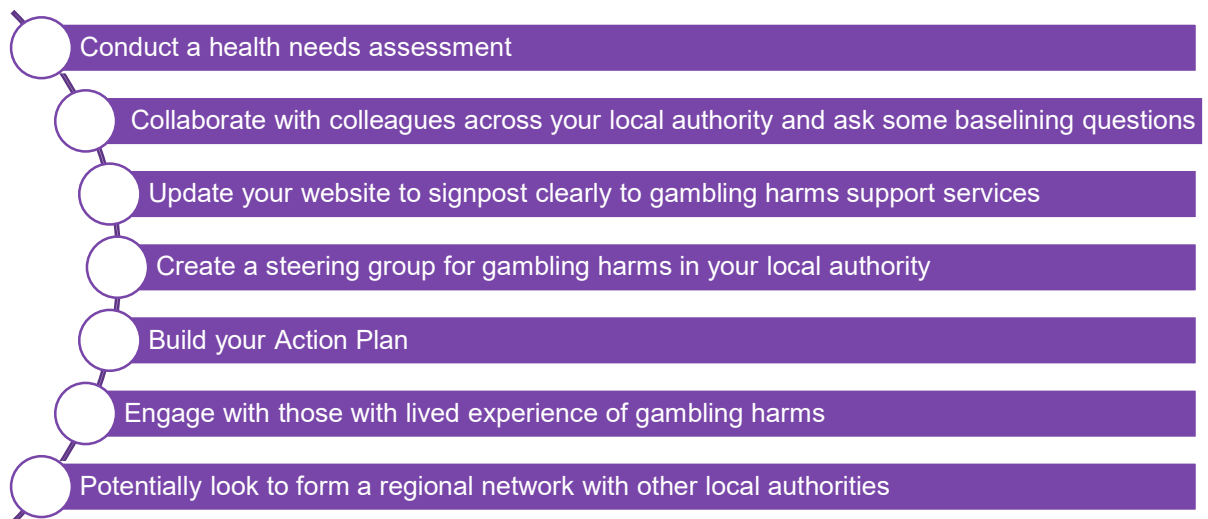
Key points raised in the presentation included:

- In the North East it is estimated that 4.9% of the population (aged 16+) are at-risk gamblers, where they experience some level of negative consequences due to gambling. This is the highest regional estimated prevalence of at-risk gambling in England and was the catalyst for seeking funding to co-ordinate action across the region.
- The Association of Directors of Public Health in the North East (ADPH NE) were awarded £750,000 of funding from the Gambling Commission's Regulatory Settlements Fund. The funding is hosted by Middlesbrough Council and has been used to develop and implement a 3-year regional gambling-related harms programme.
- Over the last year, the 'Regional Office for Gambling Harms' has worked to provide strategic direction, leadership, support to the 12 local authorities and produce resources to support ADPH NE's approach to gambling related harms.
- A whole systems approach has been adopted with key stakeholders engaged including Public Health, academia, University wellbeing services, Planning and Licensing, Financial inclusion, VCSE organisations, treatment and support providers in the NE, MECC NE (Make Every Contact Count)
- Governance Structure:

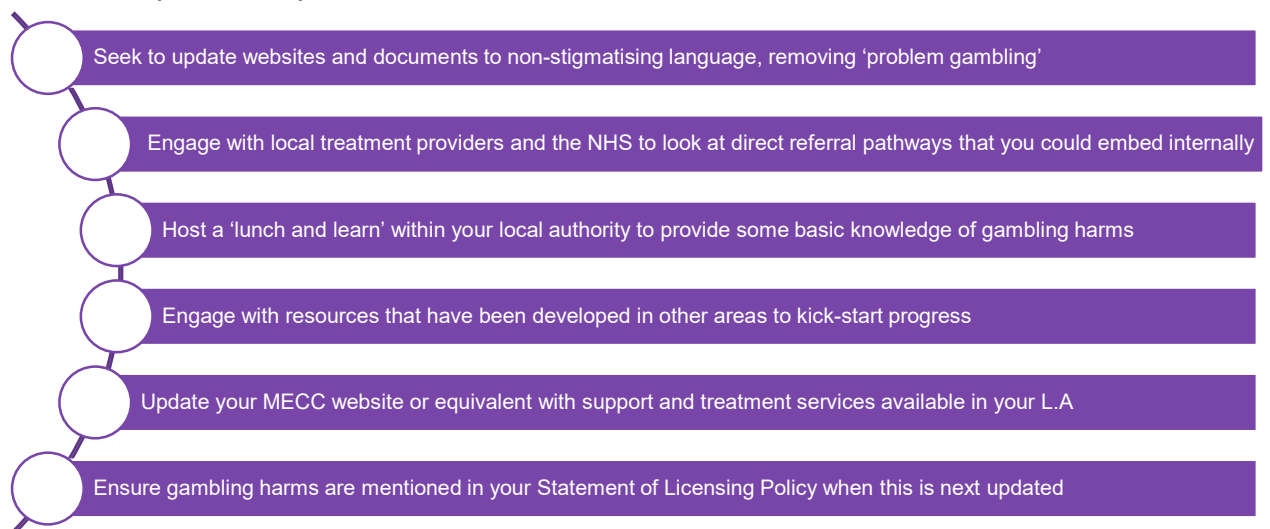


- Working together in a whole systems approach has really helped drive forward progress and will hopefully secure long-lasting impact beyond the Programme.

- The regional approach is built on 8 pillars and is based on the regions approach to alcohol and tobacco. Progress has been made against each of the pillars.
- The pillars are:
 - Support & partnerships
 - Advocacy
 - Media, Communications and Education
 - Treatment
 - Data, Research, Evaluation
 - Licensing
 - Protecting Young People
 - Lived experience
- ADPH NE have produced [a how to guide for local authorities](#), [a gambling harms slide deck](#) to help with training and messaging, and a [slide deck of the academic evidence](#) to provide relevant and up to date literature to aid public health colleagues in evidencing gambling related harms as a public health concern.
- Alice identified initial steps that local authorities can take to reduce gambling harms:



- And some potential quick wins:



- Progress has been made across the region but each council has different capacity and priorities. Awareness has increased amongst front line staff and screening questions are being embedded across council's and VCSE organisations.

- NIHR funding is potentially available (National Institute for Health and Care Research) for specific research projects in partnership with the University of Southampton. Opportunity for collaboration with the University of Southampton.

3) Working Together to Address Gambling Harms – Matt Smith, Director of External Affairs at Betknowmore UK and Expert by Experience

- Matt delivered a presentation outlining the work being delivered by Betknowmore UK with the London Borough of Islington.

Key points raised in the presentation included:

- Betknowmore UK is part of the [National Gambling Support Network](#) and has a mission to ‘provide support and training services that prevent and address personal and societal harms caused by gambling.’
- Betknowmore UK provide 3 key services:
 - Peer Aid (individuals harmed by gambling receive support from trained Peer Supporters, who themselves have fully recovered from gambling harms and addiction)
 - New Beginnings (a peer support service for women directly harmed by gambling and affected others, offering support in one-to-one and group environments)
 - GOALS (Gambling Outreach and Living Support (GOALS) Service works within local communities to enhance resilience to gambling harms.
- Gambling harms have a significant impact on the services provided by local authorities and local priorities – Including Licensing, Community Safety, Public Health, Housing, Children’s Services and Adult Social Services.
- It is estimated that 10,000 residents in Islington may be struggling with gambling harm out of a population of 230,000. Support was available for drug and alcohol addiction but not for gambling harms. Betknowmore UK were approached by the council to work with them and has been providing local solutions to issues in the Borough.

The Solutions

Training and consultancy	Screening and assessment	Support and treatment	Organisational support
Bespoke training and consultancy quality assured by City & Guilds	Screening tool questions co-produced by academics and local authority	Bespoke support services such as drop-ins, community outreach and single sex interventions	Strategic planning days to inform integration into public health and social care
Informed by ‘lived experience’ and sector leading experts	Residents onboarded to support and treatment pathway as quickly as possible	Brief intervention resources and awareness packs for all residents and stakeholders	Quality assured training and workplace resources for all employers and employees

- Betknowmore UK have delivered a WorkSafe session to Islington staff members from across departments to better equip them in having conversations around gambling harms and awareness around the topic.
- Betknowmore have been holding sessions at Access Islington Hubs. These centres offer local people the opportunity to access early intervention and prevention services that support their needs.
- To date they have held 18 Hub sessions and have facilitated 348 brief interventions.
- Betknowmore UK is widening its engagement with council services in addition to attending Hub sessions.
- They are working with faith forums to access minority ethnic groups who are at high risk of gambling harm but are under represented when it comes to accessing support.
- The council does not pay for the support. It is funded through Gamble Aware.
- Matt identified the impact the work with Islington has had so far:

The Impact

Training and consultancy	Screening and assessment	Support and treatment	Organisational support
Awareness of issues and have clear understanding of their impact	Collation of evidence and harm indicators	Improved health and wellbeing of residents	Clear pathways to support for residents and staff
Acquire tools and knowledge to address gambling harms	True fiscal cost of hidden harms emerge	Reduction in associated co-morbid issues	Robust risk management and accountability

- The importance of the support from Councillors, especially Cabinet Members, was recognised particularly in ensuring engagement from across the council.
- Betknowmore UK are keen to expand their work providing wrap around support with local authorities. The introduction of the statutory levy will result in a new system emerging and the existing providers of support are keen to be a key part of the support network in reducing gambling related harms moving forward.