

Gambling awareness and support Aberdeen city Anti-Poverty Outcome awareness group

Summary

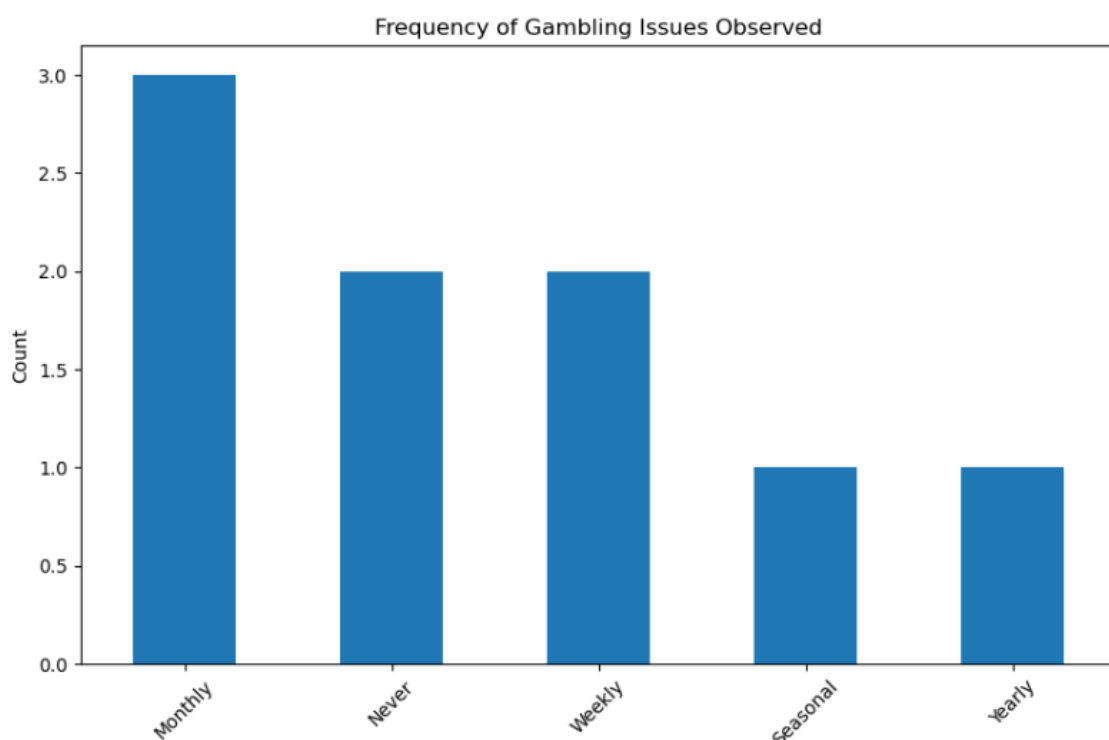
The Anti-poverty outcome improvement group (AP OIG) are exploring whether the impact of harmful gambling should be something the group focus on. A whole system approach is needed to provide appropriate support and guidance to professionals/ volunteers and communities. To help capture a picture of what support services providing financial advice are observing around gambling behaviour, a survey was cascaded to front facing staff/ volunteers by the AP OIG representatives. The survey also captured levels of knowledge, skills and confidence of staff / volunteers, and asked participants about what actions should be prioritised to improve support pathways.

9 staff across 4 organisations provided feedback on their experiences.

Key Themes

1. Staff/ volunteers were asked if they had observed/ evidenced gambling impacting on their clients

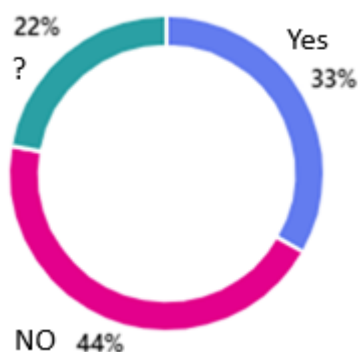
- Most respondents had observed gambling impacting on their clients, with varying frequencies from monthly to yearly activity.
- Some services have identified gambling behaviours when reviewing bank statements. It was noted that identified payments to online gambling sites/ bingo sites can impact on accessing certain financial support. This approach also enabled staff to highlight and discuss the cost of gambling behaviours.



2. Training and Confidence:

- Most respondents indicated they had not or were unsure if they had accessed training. The respondents that had accessed training, had done so over the past 2 years. One participant indicating they had received training in the past 2 weeks (from completing the survey). Citizens advice training, and Fast forward (Paul) were the providers mentioned.

Have you ever accessed training on Gambling awareness?



How confident are you raising the issue of Gambling to a client?



- Confidence in raising the issue of gambling was slightly above average for 5 staff, however 4 staff indicated lower than average levels of confidence.

3. Support Needs and Recommendations:

Participants indicated Training was a top priority, followed by normalising conversations about gambling and being more equipped with information on support services and tools.

Please rate what you feel your service needs to proactively implement to be more 'Gambling aware' and provide appropriate support/ sign posting for clients and new referrals.



4. Further comments

- Comments on the video embedded into the survey prompted thoughts around the potential prevalence of harmful gambling and challenges around raising the issues with clients as well as staff/ volunteers. It also highlighted the difficulties in getting the right support for people affected by harmful gambling.
- Anecdotally it was observed that generally women tend to be more open about their gambling activity, with most tending to favour online sites. Men are known to find it more challenging to open up about gambling and tended to use high street bookie shops more, or report overspending when they are intoxicated.
- Practical examples were shared with current screening for support with accessing benefits. Viewing bank statements are a requirement for assessing clients financial situation. This can highlight payments to ecommerce competitions (i.e. Bounty), Bingo sites and gambling sites. Practitioners are provided with an opportunity to raise the issue when gambling debts are totalled. People that may indicate spending 'Just a couple of quid now and again' can be shown the frequency of use, and the amount being spent which could be redirected in their budget.
- It was noted that partners may not specifically record gambling in their current systems, however, a note will be added to a clients profile to support with signposting.

Conclusion

Gambling behaviours can be secretive and hidden due to stigma and a sense of shame or embarrassment. This can make it challenging for individuals disclose their behaviours when they may be in need of financial support due to other issues such as a relationship breakdown or loss of a job. The survey results indicate the need for training and awareness across partners to improve confidence levels around talking about gambling related harms and signposting to appropriate support. The survey also suggests that there is a need for improved reporting processes to support with collaboration across service to provide effective support pathways to clients who may be impacted by gambling related harms.