

## Slough Borough Council

**Report To:** Slough Health and Well-being Board

**Date:** 5 December 2024

**Subject:** Gambling Related Harm in Slough

**Chief Officer:** Tessa Lindfield, Director of Public Health

**Contact Officer:** Alisha Withem, Public Health Programme Officer – Wider Determinants

**Ward(s):** All

**Exempt:** NO

**Appendices:** [Appendix 1. - Red Card Gambling Education and Support Services ].

### 1. Summary and Recommendations

1.1 This report sets out to inform the Board of the of the impact gambling is having on Slough communities and how we are proposing to reduce the harm.

Please indicate which priority in the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy, [Slough Wellbeing Strategy 2020 – 2025](#), your report links to:

Priority 1 – Starting Well	Priority 2 - Integration	Priority 3 – Strong, Health and Attractive Neighbourhoods	Priority 4 – Workplace Health
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A town where residents can live healthier, safer and more independent lives by providing harm reduction education on gambling and being aware of the impact of the amount of gambling venues there are in Slough</li><li>• Work with local communities to enable them to deliver mutual support at neighbourhood level.</li></ul>	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with local communities to understand the issues facing them.</li> <li>• Increase levels of resident satisfaction with local place and improve levels of happiness.</li> <li>• Improve life chances of residents, by focusing on areas such as housing, poverty, education and employment.</li> <li>• Reduce health inequalities between wards</li> </ul>	
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1.2 Consideration:

- Information
- Discussion
- Decision
- Endorsement

**Recommendations:**

1.3 The Health and Well-being Board is recommended to:

- (a) Support looking at the sub-groups of the population that suffer from multiple disadvantages that may be more at risk of gambling through the joint strategic needs assessment process.
- (b) Use influence and powers around licensing, health education and promotion, and training to improve the environment regarding gambling.
- (c) Conduct a risk assessment on neighbourhoods with higher levels of gambling and license application.
- (d) Ensure that there is responsible gambling messaging and resources available for individuals at risk of addiction. Promote responsible gambling initiatives and awareness campaigns.
- (e) Promote and encourage the collaboration of local services to improve awareness and accessibility of treatment and education on gambling related harm.

- (f) Consider exploring Red Card and other local organisation's education programme to address gambling related health concerns in Slough.

## 2. Report

### Introductory paragraph

- 2.1 The impact of gambling on Slough is multifaceted, and its effects are felt across different aspects of the community, from economic implications to public health concerns. Gambling can contribute to addiction, crime, and financial hardship, particularly in vulnerable groups.
- 2.2 Local authorities are tasked with monitoring the situation, regulating the number and location of gambling venues, and working with community organizations to mitigate the harmful effects of gambling on the population. As with many towns, addressing gambling-related harm in Slough involves a combination of local policy, community engagement, and support for individuals struggling with addiction.
- 2.3 While Slough Borough Council (SBC) doesn't directly license online gambling operators, we play a crucial role in regulating the physical presence of gambling venues in their areas. Public Health and Public Protection can set local policies, inspect venues, enforce gambling laws, and help mitigate gambling-related harm.
- 2.4 This report supports SBC corporate priority to achieve 'A town where residents can live healthier, safer and more independent lives'. This report provides information on the issue of gambling related harm nationally and how this might translate to Slough.

### Background

- 2.5 Types of regulated gambling:
- Betting: Sports betting (both in-person and online).
  - Adult Gaming Centres: like arcades- open 24/7
  - Casino Games: Includes roulette, blackjack, and poker.
  - Lotteries: Both national and private lotteries.
  - Bingo: Both land-based and online bingo.
- 2.6 Advertising and Promotions  
Gambling advertising is tightly controlled. Advertisements must not be misleading or encourage excessive gambling. Operators must ensure their advertising targets are age-appropriate and must not appeal to children.
- 2.7 Responsible Gambling  
Operators are required to promote responsible gambling and take steps to protect vulnerable individuals. They must offer tools like self-exclusion, setting deposit limits, and providing information on gambling addiction.
- 2.8 Online Gambling  
Online gambling is fully legal in the UK if the operator is licensed by the UK Gambling Commission. Offshore operators must also obtain a license if they intend to offer their services to UK residents. Gambling websites, including betting, poker, and casino sites, must be licensed by the UK Gambling Commission if they serve UK customers.

## 2.9 Problem Gambling

The UK government and organizations like GambleAware provide resources and support for individuals who may be affected by gambling addiction.

## 2.10 UK Gambling Statistics

- An estimated 0.5% of UK adults (approximately 400,000 people) are considered to suffer from problem gambling, with 1.1% at moderate risk and 2.7% at low risk of gambling-related harm. This means that nearly 1 in 25 adults are at risk of experiencing negative consequences related to gambling.
- 42% of people who gamble from minority communities experience some level of gambling problems, compared to 20% of White British people. This is largely attributed to systemic racism, discrimination, and social inequalities that lead to gambling being used as both a financial and emotional coping mechanism.
- Gambling among children (11-16 years old): In the 2022 Young People and Gambling Report, it was revealed that 7% of children aged 11-16 years old in the UK had gambled in the past year, with approximate 50,000 children classified as problem gamblers. (OHID, 2023)

## 2.11 Slough Gambling Statistics

- The Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) measures levels of gambling behaviour which may cause harm to an individual, ranging from low-risk gambling: score 1-2, moderate risk gambling: 3-7, and problem gambling: 8+ (*GambleAware, 2023*).
- Below are estimated levels of gambling related harm in Slough and the use of treatment, support and advice based on the annual GB treatment and support survey 2022. It is estimated 1 in 7 people in slough have a PGSI score of 1 or more (15.1%) This compares to 13.4 % across GB. 1 in 13 (7.5%) have a PGSI score 3+, compares to 5.9% across GB. 1 in 25 (3.9%) have a score of PGSI 8+, compared to 2.9% across GB. 19.1 % of those who have a score of PGSI 1+ would like treatment, support, or advice to deal with their problem gambling (*GambleAware, 2023*).
- Some people in Slough are accessing support but we can continue to support further in this (*GambleAware, 2023*).

2.12 Due to Sloughs high deprivation levels this is indicative of how gambling companies target specific areas and don't adhere to guidance to protect vulnerable communities. With high levels of income disparity and social inequality, residents may be more vulnerable to gambling-related harms.

2.13 Inclusion of national gambling recommendations on:

- Licensing policy
- Workplace health strategy/Making Every Contact Count (MECC)
- Mental Health services locally
- Gambling Harm Reduction programme delivery

## 2.14 Impact on Public Health

People who experience problem gambling, the effects can be devastating, leading to:

- Financial difficulties, including bankruptcy, loss of income, and debt.

- Mental health problems, such as anxiety, depression, stress, and suicide.
- Family breakdowns and relationship issues due to the impact of gambling on household finances.
- Increased levels of addiction
- Crime or anti-social behaviour linked to gambling. (*OHID, 2023*)

2.15 In Slough, as in other areas, there may be residents who develop gambling problems, especially with the rise of online gambling and easy access to fixed-odds betting terminals (FOBTs) in betting shops.

### **2.16 Increased risk of crime and anti-social behaviour**

As with other urban areas, there can be concerns about the link between gambling and crime. For some individuals, the desire to finance gambling may lead to:

- Criminal activity, such as theft, fraud, or borrowing money from illegal sources.
- Increased anti-social behaviour in and around betting shops or casinos, particularly if people are gambling large sums of money or chasing losses.

Gambling-related crime may place additional pressure on local police and the criminal justice system.

## **3. Implications of the Recommendation**

### **3.1 Health and Well-being Board and Partners Implications**

3.1.1 Promote and encourage the collaboration of local services to improve awareness and education on gambling related harm. Support system changes to include gambling related concerns in the SBC Licensing Policy.

### **3.2 Equality implications**

3.2.1 Addressing gambling related harm through these recommendations will address the health inequalities below:

#### **Vulnerable Groups and Social Impact**

Slough has a diverse population with some areas of high deprivation. Some of these groups may be particularly vulnerable to the risks of gambling, such as:

- Young people who may be exposed to gambling advertising or encouraged to gamble online through traditional online gambling, gaming, or shopping websites.
- Low-income families who may use gambling to try to escape financial difficulties but end up in a cycle of debt and hardship.
- Ethnic minorities, as research suggests gambling related harm can be worse amongst demographics that face stigma both in and out of their communities.

We need to consider accessibility of gambling venues in areas of the town where vulnerable populations live or work and where children and young people frequent.

### **3.2.2 Cultural Stigma and Shame**

- **Family Honor and Expectations:** In many ethnic minority cultures, there is a strong emphasis on preserving family reputation. Admitting to a gambling problem could bring shame not just to the individual, but to their entire family, leading many to avoid seeking help.
- **Taboo Nature of Addiction:** In some communities, addiction, particularly gambling, is a taboo subject. The fear of judgment or social ostracism often prevents people from acknowledging their problem, especially in close-knit or conservative circles.

### 3.2.3 Fear of Social Exclusion

- **Community Judgement:** Acknowledging a gambling issue can lead to fears of being excluded or marginalized within one's community. There may be concerns about being seen as weak, irresponsible, or unworthy, which could affect relationships and even one's reputation or marriage prospects.
- **Confidentiality Concerns:** Many individuals worry that seeking help through formal services might not be kept private, especially in smaller communities where healthcare professionals or social workers may be from the same cultural background.

### 3.2.4 Lack of Culturally Relevant Support

- **Cultural Insensitivity:** Many addiction services are not tailored to address the specific cultural contexts or challenges that individuals from ethnic minority communities face. This lack of cultural competence can leave people feeling misunderstood or alienated.
- **Lack of Representation:** The absence of professionals from similar backgrounds in addiction treatment services can contribute to feelings of isolation and mistrust in the support system, making it harder for individuals to seek help.

### 3.2.5 Religious Considerations

- **Religious Guilt:** In some faiths, such as Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity, gambling is prohibited or strongly discouraged. Admitting to a gambling problem may be seen as a violation of religious values, leading to guilt or fear of spiritual condemnation.
- **Faith as a Primary Solution:** Some individuals may rely more on religious practices or seek guidance from spiritual leaders rather than accessing professional treatment. However, religious interventions may not address the psychological or behavioural dimensions of gambling addiction.

### 3.2.6 Lack of Awareness and Education

- **Limited Knowledge of Available Support:** Many people from ethnic minority communities may not be aware that gambling addiction is a recognised issue with accessible support services. This lack of awareness is exacerbated by limited outreach to these groups.
- **Misunderstanding Gambling Addiction:** Gambling addiction may not be fully understood within some communities. It may be seen as a personal flaw or poor decision-making, rather than a serious medical or psychological condition that requires professional intervention.

#### Economic Pressures

- **Financial Responsibility:** Heads of families admitting to a gambling problem could be seen as a failure to fulfil this role. Additionally, the fear of losing income or taking

time off work to seek help is a significant barrier, particularly for those who are already financially struggling.

- **Gambling as a Financial Solution:** For some individuals in financially difficult circumstances, gambling may be viewed as a potential means of financial escape. As a result, they may be reluctant to acknowledge the extent of their gambling issue, hoping that a big win might resolve their financial problems.

(*GambleAware*, 2023)

### 3.3 *Environmental implications*

#### 3.3.1 Raising awareness of the current gambling environment in Slough will allow us to protect the community by providing training and affecting licensing policy and regulation.

Slough has 28 gambling venues (betting shops and adult gaming centres) Reading has 26.

#### 3.3.2 Gambling risks for Slough & the UK

Slough, like many urban areas in the UK, has experienced some of the social and economic challenges associated with gambling. The presence of betting shops, adult gaming centres, and online gambling has an impact on local communities, businesses, and individuals.

According to the UK Gambling Commission's 2022 report, around 44% of adults in the UK participate in some form of gambling, which includes activities like betting, lotteries, and casino games.

#### 3.3.3 Clustering of Betting Shops and Gambling Venues

The clustering of betting shops and gambling venues in particular areas (such as in town centres or near public transport hubs) can lead to concerns about the concentration of gambling opportunities, which might increase the risk of gambling-related harm in the local population. There are concerns clustering may contribute to:

- Increased accessibility, especially for vulnerable groups such as low-income residents, young people, or those with gambling problems.
- A normalization of gambling in everyday life, particularly if there are multiple betting outlets near each other.

Local authorities may be concerned about the social impact, such as an increase in anti-social behaviour or poverty-related issues or a lack of social cohesion.

### 3.4 Financial implications

#### 3.4.1 Economic Impact on Local Communities

The negative effects of gambling addiction outweigh the small economic benefits.

- Increased betting shops affect the overall environment and could add to antisocial behaviour causing others not to use local shops.

- Based on the Annual GB treatment and support survey £4.1 million is the fiscal cost of 'problem gambling' in Slough
- People who experience gambling addiction may spend all their income on gambling, leading to financial hardship and potentially reducing their spending in other areas of the local economy (e.g., shops, restaurants, or leisure activities).
- There is a strain on local services, such as addiction support services, debt counselling, and mental health services, as they respond to increased demand from individuals impacted by gambling-related issues. (*OHID*, 2023)

### 3.5 Legal implications

3.5.1 Gambling law in the UK is governed by the Gambling Act 2005, which regulates all forms of gambling, including casinos, betting, lotteries, and online gambling. The UK Gambling Commission is the main body overseeing and regulating gambling activities. The Commission licenses gambling operators, such as casinos and betting companies. The legal age for gambling in the UK is 18 for most types of gambling, including betting, gaming, and using online casinos. There are certain restrictions in place for young people, such as limits on participating in gambling promotions or certain types of gambling. As well as setting deposit limits.

### 3.6 Risk management implications

#### 3.6.1 Local Government Response

SBC is responsible for managing the impact of gambling through its Statement of Licensing Policy and through Public Health as a responsible authority.

#### 3.6.2 Licensing of Premise

Local authorities in the UK have a role in regulating and overseeing gambling activities within their local areas. LA's don't license gambling operators (that's the responsibility of the UK Gambling Commission), but they approve licensing of premises.

- Casinos
- Betting shops
- Bingo halls
- Adult gaming centres (e.g., arcade machines)
- Racecourses

The Licensing Department ensures premises meet local requirements, such as:

- Building regulations
- Health and safety standards
- Planning permission

#### 3.6.3 Setting Local Gambling Policies

Statement of Licensing Policy sets out how we will approach gambling regulation in Slough.

- To prevent crime, ensure fair and open gambling, protecting children and vulnerable people
- The local area's needs, such as whether a high concentration of gambling premises might cause harm to the community.



The policy can influence decisions on whether to allow new gambling premises in certain areas, or whether to impose conditions on existing operators.

### 3.6.4 Regulating the Location and Density of Gambling Premises

Local authorities can restrict the number or location of gambling premises in certain areas.

- They may not allow new gambling venues to open near schools, parks, or other areas where vulnerable people might be at higher risk.
- They may choose to impose specific conditions, such as limiting the hours of operation or restricting the type of gambling offered.

### 3.6.5 Inspecting and Enforcing Local Gambling Rules

Local authorities can;

- Conduct inspections of licensed gambling premises to ensure compliance with the Gambling Act and local licensing policies.
- Take enforcement action if an operator is violating the rules, such as operating without a license, allowing underage gambling, or not following responsible gambling practices.

### 3.7 Procurement implications

None

### 3.8 Workforce implications

- CPD for council staff
- CPD for Slough professionals
- Included in MECC

### 3.9 Property implications **[Discretionary]**

None

## 4. Background Papers

#### 4.1 *GambleAware GB maps local authorities*. GambleAware. (2023).

<https://www.gambleaware.org/our-research/publication-library/treatment-and-support-survey/gambleaware-gb-maps-local-authorities/>

#### 4.2 OHID. (2023, January 11). *Gambling-related harms evidence review: Summary*.

GOV.UK. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gambling-related-harms-evidence-review/gambling-related-harms-evidence-review-summary--2>

#### 4.3 OHID. (2023, January 11). *The economic cost of gambling-related harm in England*.

Article. GOV.UK

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63bc25b4d3bf7f262c5ad31f/The-economic-cost-of-gambling-related-harm-in-England\\_evidence-update-2023.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63bc25b4d3bf7f262c5ad31f/The-economic-cost-of-gambling-related-harm-in-England_evidence-update-2023.pdf)

## **Appendices**

### Appendix 1. - Red Card Gambling Education and Support Services

Red Card is a gambling commission approved delivery partner and are dedicated to promoting gambling awareness and education for all. The Gambling Harm Reduction Education programme is delivered by local people who understand the affects gambling has on Slough residents.

They provided CPD accredited courses and provide referrals through GamCare.

The education offer includes:

- Others who are affected by someone's gambling
- Rise in women gambling
- Ethnic minority gambling concerns
- Harm and Suicide
- Gaming and Gambling
- Recovery Toolkit