

**TITLE OF REPORT: OSC Review – The impact of Gambling on the Borough  
Evidence Gathering – Gambling Harm in Gateshead**

**REPORT OF: Strategic Director, Communities and Environment**

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## SUMMARY

The Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee have agreed that it will carry out a review of the impact of gambling in Gateshead as part of the 2016/17 programme.

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### Background

The Committee agreed that the review will draw upon local and national evidence and will focus on:

- **Gambling in Gateshead** – the distribution, types and number of premises licensed for gambling and how this has changed over time; the types of gambling taking place in the borough
- **The legal framework for regulation of gambling and the role of the regulators** - the Gambling Act 2005 and the respective roles of the Gambling Commission and Gateshead Licensing Authority; the impact of other regulatory regimes on gambling activity
- **Local and national concerns about gambling** - evidence and observations from local and national regulators, operators, trade bodies, treatment providers, charities and public agencies
- **Developing research evidence on gambling related harm** - a review of recent developments and best practice and how it can be used in Gateshead to minimise gambling related harm.

The second evidence gathering session took place on 31 October 2016 and the Committee discussed the issues surrounding Fixed Odds Betting Terminals (FOBTs). The following issues were identified by the Committee:

- FOBTs are becoming more common. In England there are believed to be 33,500, with potentially 168 in Gateshead's 42 licensed betting premises.
- Evidence does not yet exist that directly links FOBTs with problem gambling, and addiction to gambling.
- The Government have been reluctant to seriously curtail the availability of FOBTs in communities in the absence of this evidence.
- The gaming industry has made the case to Government that curtailing FOBTs would have serious impacts on tax income, the economy and on jobs.

## **Purpose of this Session**

This third evidence gathering session will focus on what is known about the scale of harm caused by problem gambling in Gateshead, and the impact of this on local people.

The harm caused by problem gambling can be varied and difficult to attribute, indeed the term “problem gambling” is one that is difficult to define.

The information that follows uses a definition that is widely adopted, and attempts to provide some idea of the likely scale of the issues in Gateshead.

Further information is provided about “at risk gambling”, with estimates of its extent in the Gateshead community.

A representative from the Gambling Commission will attend the meeting to inform members of the work of the Commission and its future plans, and to answer members’ questions.

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## **The following information on Problem Gambling and At-Risk Gambling has been drawn from the following sources:**

- Health Survey for England. National Statistics, 2012
- Scottish Health Survey. National Statistics, 2012
- Gambling behaviour in England and Scotland. NatCen, 2014
- Problem Gambling, Royal College of Psychiatrists. Retrieved 9/10/16, <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/problemsdisorders/problemgambling.aspx>

## **Problem gambling**

Problem gambling is gambling to a degree that compromises, disrupts or damages family, personal or recreational pursuits.

Estimates of problem gambling amongst adults varies from 0.4 – 0.6%. In Gateshead, this means between 663 and 995 people.

There is a significant difference between genders. The prevalence of problem gambling is higher amongst men (0.7-1.0%) than amongst women (0.1-0.2%)

Risk factors associated with problem gambling were:

- being male
- being from Black/Black British, Asian/Asian British or other non-White backgrounds
- having low mental wellbeing
- having ever had high blood pressure.

Problem gamblers are more likely than other people to experience the following harms:

- Financial harms: overdue utility bills; borrowing from family friends and loan sharks; debts; pawning or selling possessions; eviction or repossession; defaults; committing illegal acts like fraud, theft, embezzlement to finance gambling; bankruptcy; etc.
- Family harms: preoccupied with gambling so normal family life becomes difficult; increased arguments over money and debts; emotional and physical abuse, neglect and violence towards spouse/partner and/or children; relationship problems and separation/divorce.
- Health harms: low self-esteem; stress-related disorders; anxious, worried or mood swings; poor sleep and appetite; substance misuse; depression, suicidal ideas and attempts; etc.
- School/college/work harms: poor school, college or work performance; increased absenteeism; expulsion or dismissal.

### **At risk gambling**

These are people who have experienced some difficulty with their gambling behavior, but who are not classified as “problem gamblers”.

- Can be at ‘low risk’ or at ‘moderate risk’ of harm.
- 3.2% of adults were low risk gamblers
- 1.0% were moderate risk gamblers
- Overall 4.2% of adults are ‘at-risk’ gamblers.
- This equates to 6,965 adults in Gateshead.

Rates of low risk and moderate risk gambling are:

- higher among men than women
- higher among younger age groups

Factors associated with at-risk gambling are:

- age (with younger people being more likely to be at-risk gamblers)
- religion
- cigarette smoking
- increased levels of alcohol consumption.

### **Limitations on knowledge of the scale of the problem in Gateshead**

In the preparation of this report, the following have been approached for any evidence about the extent of gambling related problems in Gateshead:

- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Public Health Team
- Community Safety Team
- Safeguarding Adults
- Gamcare (a gambling charity)

It is apparent that there does not currently exist a mechanism to record and measure problems caused by gambling in our local community, and none were able to provide

local statistics about specific problems, nor the numbers of individuals, or families, affected by them.

## **Presentation by Rob Burkitt of the Gambling Commission**

Rob Burkitt is Lead for Shared Regulation and Better Regulation at Gambling Commission, and has been in post for 8 years.

The Gambling Commission was set up under the Gambling Act 2005 to regulate commercial gambling in Great Britain in partnership with licensing authorities.

On 1 October 2013 the Commission took over the responsibilities of the National Lottery Commission to regulate the National Lottery under the National Lottery etc Act 1993.

It is an independent non-departmental public body (NDPB) sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

The Commission has over 250 employees, mostly based at offices in Birmingham.

Its work is funded by fees set by DCMS and paid by the organisations and individuals it licenses, and, in respect of National Lottery functions, by grant from the National Lottery Distribution Fund.

The Commission's priorities for 2016/17 include:

- Increase its focus on putting consumers at the heart of regulation. They are concerned particularly for vulnerable consumers and will have a sharp focus on progress to deliver the new three-year National Responsible Gambling Strategy, and on the role of the Responsible Gambling Trust (RGT) in implementing this strategy.
- Through strengthening the licence conditions and codes of practice (LCCP) on crime, advising on anti money laundering requirements, and reviewing the work of the Sports Betting Intelligence Unit, they will work to give consumers further confidence that betting is crime-free and markets are not rigged
- Review the Commission's enforcement policies and practices to promote credible deterrence
- Further information is available in the Commission's business plan <http://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/pdf/Corporate-Business-Plan-2016-17.pdf>

## **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Committee gives its views on the evidence presented.

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