



Chosen Family and Gambling Harm

Recognising the People Who
Matter Most



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Recognising the People Who Matter Most

When people think about affected others, they often think about partners, parents, children, or siblings.

Whilst these relationships are important, they do not reflect everyone's experience.

Within LGBTQ+ communities, many people build strong support networks outside of their biological families. These relationships can provide love, acceptance, practical support, emotional connection, and a sense of belonging.

These networks are often known as chosen family.

At Recover with Pride, we recognise that gambling harm can have a significant impact on chosen family members, friends, ex-partners, housemates, and other important people in someone's life.

If someone's gambling has affected you, your experiences are valid, regardless of your relationship to them.



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What Is Chosen Family?

Chosen family refers to the people we choose to have in our lives and who provide support, care, and connection.

This may include:

- Close friends.
- Ex-partners.
- Housemates.
- Community members.
- Mentors.
- LGBTQ+ peers.
- Neighbours.
- People who have become like family over time.

For many LGBTQ+ people, chosen family relationships are every bit as important as biological family relationships.

Sometimes they are even more important.

Why Chosen Family Matters in LGBTQ+ Communities

Not all LGBTQ+ people experience acceptance from their family of origin.

Some people may have experienced:

- Rejection.
- Estrangement.
- Discrimination.
- Lack of understanding.
- Limited family support.

Because of this, many LGBTQ+ people create support networks that provide the acceptance, care, and belonging they need.

These relationships often become the people someone turns to during life's most challenging moments.

When gambling harm affects somebody within these networks, the impact can be significant.

"I'm Just a Friend"

One of the most common things we hear is:

"I'm only a friend."

Or:

"We're not related."

Or:

"I'm not really family."

Many people minimise their experiences because they don't believe they have a legitimate reason to seek support.

The reality is:

You do not need a formal family role to be affected by gambling harm.

If you:

- Care about someone.
- Support someone.
- Worry about someone.
- Have been impacted by their gambling.

Then your experience matters.

How Gambling Harm Can Affect Chosen Family

Chosen family members often experience many of the same impacts as partners and relatives.

These can include:

Emotional Impact

- Anxiety.
- Worry.
- Frustration.
- Anger.
- Sadness.
- Fear about the future.
- Emotional exhaustion.

How Gambling Harm Can Affect Chosen Family

Relationship Impact

- Loss of trust.
- Communication difficulties.
- Conflict.
- Changes in the relationship.
- Feeling pushed away.

Practical Impact

- Lending money.
- Providing accommodation.
- Offering emotional support.
- Managing crises.
- Helping someone access support.

Over time, these responsibilities can become overwhelming.

Carrying More Than People Realise

Many chosen family members become primary sources of support.

You may be the person who:

- Receives late-night calls.
- Helps during financial crises.
- Provides emotional reassurance.
- Supports someone after relapse.
- Accompanies them to appointments.
- Holds difficult information.

Whilst this role may come from love and care, it can also be emotionally draining.

Many people carry far more responsibility than others realise.

The Unique Role of Friends

Friends are often the first people to notice when something isn't right.

You may identify:

- Changes in behaviour.
- Increased secrecy.
- Financial difficulties.
- Social withdrawal.
- Emotional distress.

Unlike parents or partners, friends often feel uncertain about whether they should say something.

You may worry:

- It's none of my business.
- I don't want to upset them.
- What if I'm wrong?
- What if they stop speaking to me?

These concerns are understandable.

Expressing concern in a compassionate and respectful way can sometimes be incredibly important.

Supporting Someone Doesn't Mean Fixing Everything

Many chosen family members become trapped in a cycle of trying to rescue the person experiencing gambling harm.

You may find yourself:

- Constantly checking on them.
- Solving problems.
- Providing money.
- Managing crises.
- Putting their needs first.

Whilst these actions often come from a place of love, it is important to remember:

You cannot recover on somebody else's behalf.

You can support somebody.

You can care about somebody.

You can encourage somebody.

But their recovery remains their responsibility.

Setting Boundaries Within Chosen Family Relationships

Because chosen family relationships are often deeply personal, boundary-setting can feel difficult.

You may fear:

- Damaging the relationship.
- Losing someone important.
- Letting somebody down.

However, healthy boundaries are just as important within chosen family as they are in any other relationship.

For example:

- Deciding not to lend money.
- Protecting your wellbeing.
- Taking time for yourself.
- Being honest about your limits.
- Refusing abusive behaviour.

Boundaries protect relationships by creating clarity and reducing resentment.

Housemates and Flatmates

People who live together often experience a unique impact from gambling harm.

This may include:

- Missed rent payments.
- Household financial pressures.
- Tension within the home.
- Concerns about bills.
- Worries about financial stability.

If you share living arrangements with someone experiencing gambling harm, it is important to protect your own financial wellbeing and establish clear expectations.

You are not responsible for somebody else's gambling-related financial difficulties.

Former Partners Can Be Affected Too

The impact of gambling harm does not always end when a relationship ends.

Former partners may continue to experience:

- Financial consequences.
- Co-parenting concerns.
- Emotional distress.
- Ongoing worry about someone they care about.

Support remains valid regardless of the current status of the relationship.

Isolation Within Chosen Family Networks

Sometimes gambling harm affects entire friendship groups or community networks.

People may:

- Avoid difficult conversations.
- Take sides.
- Feel uncertain how to help.
- Withdraw from social activities.

This can increase isolation for everyone involved.

Open conversations, where safe and appropriate, can help reduce secrecy and strengthen support networks.

Your Wellbeing Matters Too

A common theme we hear from chosen family members is:

"I was so focused on helping them that I forgot about myself."

If this feels familiar, take a moment to consider:

- How is this affecting me?
- What support do I need?
- What boundaries might help?
- Who supports me?

Your wellbeing deserves attention too.



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You Are an Affected Other

Whether you identify as:

- A friend.
- A chosen family member.
- A housemate.
- A former partner.
- A community member.

You can be an affected other.

You do not need a biological or legal relationship with someone to be impacted by their gambling.

The effect on your wellbeing is what matters.

How Recover with Pride Can Help

At Recover with Pride, we recognise the importance of chosen family within LGBTQ+ communities.

We provide a safe and inclusive space where chosen family members can:

- Explore the impact gambling has had on them.
- Better understand gambling harm.
- Develop healthy boundaries.
- Reduce feelings of isolation.
- Access support and guidance.
- Focus on their own wellbeing and recovery.

You do not need to justify your relationship to deserve support.



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Key Takeaway

Chosen family relationships are real, meaningful, and important.

If someone's gambling has affected your wellbeing, finances, confidence, relationships, or sense of security, your experience matters.

You do not need to be a partner, parent, or biological relative to deserve support.

You can be affected by gambling harm because you care about someone, and you deserve support because you matter too.

Key Message

Family is not defined solely by biology. Within LGBTQ+ communities, chosen family relationships are often central to people's lives. If gambling harm has affected someone important to you, your experiences are valid, and support is available.

Refer for support here:

www.switchboard.org.uk/service/recover-with-pride/referral/



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Support for Affected Others



Aila

Aila is a website for women in Scotland experiencing or affected by gambling harm, developed by women with lived and living experience. If you are being harmed by someone else's gambling, Aila brings together emotional support, financial and debt advice, and practical guidance on navigating conversations and setting boundaries, helping you find the right service at the right time. Our monthly Living Room offers a welcoming in-person and online space for women affected by their own or someone else's gambling, and the Lived and Living Library shares stories from women across Scotland. You are not alone.

Links

Website

aila-scotland.co.uk/explore-available-support/support-for-affected-others/

aila-scotland.co.uk/explore-available-support/are-you-supporting-someone-else/

aila-scotland.co.uk

Contact

hello@aila-scotland.co.uk



Ara

Ara provides free support for people across the South West affected by someone else's gambling, including partners, family members, friends and colleagues. Support includes one-to-one counselling delivered face-to-face, by telephone or online by professionally accredited, CBT-qualified counsellors. Sessions focus on emotional wellbeing, coping strategies, recovery and rebuilding confidence.

Ara also offers specialist relationship counselling support, where gambling has impacted trust, communication, finances or family life, helping people to rebuild relationships and move forward together. In addition, our easy access workshops provide practical advice, digital safety support, understanding gambling-related harms, and action planning for those seeking support at the earliest opportunity.

Links

Website

www.recovery4all.co.uk/

Refer for support here:

www.switchboard.org.uk/service/recover-with-pride/referral/



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Support for Affected Others



Betknowmore UK

Behind every person experiencing gambling harm, an estimated 6-10 other people may be affected.

A partner losing sleep. A parent caught between worry and responsibility. A young person living with tension in their home. A friend who wants to help but doesn't know how. A colleague covering up mistakes at work.

If this is you, Betknowmore UK is right behind you.

We offer digital peer support service for anyone aged 18 and above. Our Peer Supporters have City and Guilds assured training and lived experience of gambling harms. They understand what you are going through.

Supporting you through shared lived experience

As part of the statutory levy, Betknowmore UK is funded to provide 1:1 and group support to affected others in England and Scotland.

This support aims to ensure that through peer-led engagement and intervention, people are offered the most appropriate support to address their specific needs.

Links

Website

www.betknowmoreuk.org/affected-other

Breakeven

Breakeven

Breakeven offers counselling support for partners, family members and friends affected by someone else's gambling. Gambling harm can put pressure on relationships, finances and the wider household, and support is available for you too.

You can receive support even if the person who gambles is not ready to seek help. Breakeven works with affected family members and friends to help them understand their experiences and find ways to cope with the impact.

Its family and friends resources also offer guidance on looking after yourself, understanding gambling harms and having supportive, non-judgemental conversations.

Links

Website

www.breakeven.org.uk/family-and-friends

Refer for support here:

www.switchboard.org.uk/service/recover-with-pride/referral/



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Support for Affected Others



Chances

As part of Cyrenians' homelessness prevention strategy – Chances offers person-centred, non-judgemental, and non-time limited support to anyone aged 16+ in Scotland who is impacted by gambling harm. For affected others - the service adopts a Community Reinforcement & Family Training approach focused on their recovery and not the person gambling and supports with:

- Promoting self-care, general wellbeing, independence, and boundary setting
- Understanding gambling behaviour and a loved one's triggers
- Improving communication with the person gambling through positive reinforcement techniques
- Guidance & tools to encourage the person gambling to reduce the harms experienced

Online and phone options are offered Scotland wide and in-person in Edinburgh, the Lothians and Falkirk. Organisational and self-referrals are welcome via email or phone on **07983 137239**. Alternatively, a referral form can be completed (available upon request).

Links

Website

[Chances: Gambling Support](#)

Contact

[07983 137239](tel:07983137239)

chances@cyrenians.scot



Gambling Recovery Therapy

Founded by Lorraine Perrons and Claire Jones, Gambling Recovery for All CIC and Gambling Recovery Therapy Limited combine family experience of gambling harm with specialist professional training.

The CIC's Rebuild & Rise: Reclaim Your Life is a fully funded, trauma-informed 12-week online programme for eligible women across the UK affected by someone else's gambling. It focuses on emotional wellbeing, financial resilience, boundaries, confidence and rebuilding a sense of choice and control. Women can seek support whether or not the person who gambles has stopped or sought help.

Gambling Recovery Therapy Limited also offers private paid one-to-one therapy for people experiencing gambling harm and those affected by someone else's gambling, with a complimentary 30-minute introductory conversation.

Links

Website

www.gamblingrecoverytherapy.com/affected-other

forms.gle/aMA4fJbgDMSpg0Tb9

www.gamblingrecoverytherapy.com/brochure

Contact

contact@gamblingrecoverytherapy.com

Refer for support here:

www.switchboard.org.uk/service/recover-with-pride/referral/



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Support for Affected Others



Recover Together

Recover Together provides a safe and supportive space for people affected by gambling harm, including family members, partners, friends and others impacted by someone else's gambling. Reaching out can feel difficult, and people may not always know what support they need or where to start. We're here to listen and walk alongside them, helping them find a way forward that feels right for them. Our approach is shaped by lived experience of gambling harm and recovery, and we meet people with empathy, honesty and no judgement, providing support, understanding and connection.

Links

Website

recoverttogether.org/what-we-do/affected-others/



Shiltons' Silverlining

Shiltons' Silverlining supports partners, family members, friends and loved ones affected by someone else's gambling. Its Affected Others service offers a confidential space to talk, be heard and feel understood.

The charity recognises that someone else's gambling can bring anxiety, financial pressure, relationship difficulties and isolation. It offers emotional support, guidance and information to help people cope with the impact and find a way forward.

Built on lived experience, the service recognises that affected family members and friends need support for their own mental health, wellbeing and relationships too.

Links

Website

shiltonssilverlining.org/affected-others/

Refer for support here:

www.switchboard.org.uk/service/recover-with-pride/referral/



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