



How Gambling Harm Can Affect You

Understanding the Impact of
Someone Else's Gambling



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Understanding the Impact of Someone Else's Gambling

When most people think about gambling harm, they naturally focus on the person who is gambling. But gambling harm rarely affects just one person.

If someone you care about is experiencing gambling-related harm, you may also be living with the consequences every day. Whether you are a parent, partner, sibling, friend, chosen family member, flatmate, or colleague, their gambling can have a significant impact on your wellbeing.

Many affected others spend so much time worrying about and supporting someone else that they overlook the impact on themselves.

At Recover with Pride, we want you to know that your experiences matter. The effects of gambling harm on affected others are real, valid, and deserving of support.



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Gambling Harm Doesn't Have to Reach Crisis Point

Many affected others believe they should only seek support if things have become extremely serious.

You do not need to be experiencing a crisis for gambling harm to be affecting you.

You may find yourself:

- Constantly worrying about someone.
- Feeling stressed about their finances.
- Walking on eggshells around certain conversations.
- Struggling to trust what you are being told.
- Feeling emotionally exhausted.
- Spending significant time trying to support or monitor someone.

These experiences can take a toll over time, even if the situation appears manageable from the outside.

The Emotional Impact

One of the most common effects of gambling harm is emotional distress.

You may experience a wide range of emotions, sometimes all at the same time.

Anxiety and Worry

Many affected others describe being in a constant state of worry.

You might find yourself wondering:

- Are they gambling again?
- Are they telling me the truth?
- Will they be okay?
- What happens if things get worse?
- How much money has been lost?

This ongoing uncertainty can feel overwhelming.

The Emotional Impact

Anger and Frustration

It is common to feel angry about what has happened.

You may feel frustrated by:

- Repeated promises being broken.
- Ongoing secrecy.
- Financial losses.
- The impact on family relationships.
- Feeling that your own needs are being overlooked.

Feeling angry does not make you unsupportive or uncaring. It is often a natural response to difficult circumstances.

The Emotional Impact

Guilt and Self-Blame

Many affected others spend a great deal of time questioning themselves.

You may wonder:

- Should I have noticed sooner?
- Did I miss the warning signs?
- Could I have prevented this?
- Have I done enough to help?

The reality is that gambling harm often develops in ways that are difficult to recognise.

You are not responsible for another person's gambling behaviour.

The Emotional Impact

Sadness and Grief

Gambling harm can involve a sense of loss.

You may grieve:

- Loss of trust.
- Loss of financial security.
- Changes within a relationship.
- Missed opportunities.
- A sense of stability or normality.

Some people describe feeling as though they are mourning the relationship they had before gambling became an issue.

The Impact on Relationships

Gambling harm can place significant pressure on relationships.

Loss of Trust

Trust is often one of the first things affected.

This can happen when:

- Gambling is hidden.
- Financial information is withheld.
- Promises are broken.
- Important conversations are avoided.

Rebuilding trust can take time, and it is normal to find this challenging.

Changes in Family Dynamics

Family roles often shift when gambling harm is present.

You may find yourself becoming:

- The problem-solver.
- The protector.
- The person managing finances.
- The person holding everything together.

While these roles often come from a place of care, they can become exhausting and difficult to maintain.

The Impact on Relationships

Conflict and Tension

Conversations about gambling can be emotionally charged.

You may experience:

- More arguments.
- Increased tension at home.
- Difficulty discussing finances.
- Avoidance of difficult topics.
- Feeling unheard or dismissed.

Many affected others describe walking on eggshells, unsure of when or how to raise concerns.

The Impact on Your Mental Wellbeing

Living alongside gambling harm can affect your mental health.

Some affected others experience:

- Increased stress.
- Anxiety.
- Low mood.
- Depression.
- Panic attacks.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Feeling overwhelmed.

It is important to remember that your wellbeing matters too.

Supporting someone else should not come at the expense of your own health.

The Impact on Physical Wellbeing

Emotional stress often affects the body as well.

You may notice:

- Difficulty sleeping.
- Fatigue.
- Changes in appetite.
- Headaches.
- Increased tension.
- Reduced energy.

Sometimes affected others become so focused on someone else's wellbeing that they neglect their own physical health.

Looking after yourself is not selfish. It is an important part of managing the impact of gambling harm.

Financial Pressures

Even when you are not the person gambling, gambling harm can have financial consequences.

You may find yourself:

- Covering bills or expenses.
- Lending money.
- Taking on additional responsibilities.
- Worrying about debt.
- Struggling to plan for the future.
- Losing financial security.

For some affected others, financial concerns become a major source of stress.

For others, the emotional impact may feel more significant.

Every experience is valid.

Crime, Gambling Harm and the Criminal Justice System

For some affected others, gambling harm can become linked to criminal behaviour and involvement with the criminal justice system.

This can be one of the most distressing aspects of gambling harm, often bringing additional worry, shame, uncertainty, and practical challenges for those around the person gambling.

Not everyone experiencing gambling harm will come into contact with the criminal justice system. However, for some individuals, gambling-related difficulties can contribute to behaviours such as:

- Theft from family members, employers, or friends.
- Fraud or financial deception.
- Misuse of joint finances.
- Taking money without permission.
- Accumulating debt that has legal consequences.
- Being arrested, charged, or prosecuted for gambling-related offences.

For affected others, discovering criminal behaviour can be deeply upsetting and may create complex emotions.

Crime, Gambling Harm and the Criminal Justice System

You may feel:

- Shock and disbelief.
- Anger or betrayal.
- Fear about what might happen next.
- Concern for children or family members.
- Worry about finances and future stability.
- Shame about discussing what has happened.
- Confusion about whether to continue supporting the person.

Many affected others tell us that they struggle with conflicting feelings. You may still love and care about the person whilst feeling hurt by their actions and the consequences those actions have created.

These emotions are valid.

Crime, Gambling Harm and the Criminal Justice System

When Gambling Leads to Criminal Behaviour

Sometimes criminal behaviour develops as someone becomes increasingly desperate to fund their gambling, repay debts, or hide the extent of the harm.

This does not excuse the behaviour or remove responsibility for the choices made.

However, understanding the role gambling may have played can help affected others make sense of what has happened.

It is important to remember that responsibility for criminal behaviour always sits with the person who committed it.

You are not responsible for another person's actions, decisions, or legal consequences.

Crime, Gambling Harm and the Criminal Justice System

Supporting Someone Through Criminal Justice Processes

If someone you care about becomes involved with the police, courts, probation services, or prisons, it can be overwhelming for everyone involved.

You may find yourself supporting someone through:

- Police investigations.
- Court appearances.
- Sentencing.
- Probation requirements.
- Imprisonment.
- Release and reintegration into the community.

Many affected others describe feeling isolated during these experiences, particularly if they fear judgement from others.

You do not have to navigate these experiences alone.

Support is available for both gambling harms and the wider impact criminal justice involvement may have on you and your family.

Crime, Gambling Harm and the Criminal Justice System

Looking After Yourself

When criminal behaviour comes to light, many affected others immediately focus on helping the other person manage the consequences.

Whilst this may feel natural, it is equally important to consider your own needs.

Ask yourself:

- Am I safe?
- Are my finances protected?
- Do I have support around me?
- Have I spoken to someone I trust?
- What boundaries do I need to establish?

It is okay to prioritise your wellbeing.

Supporting someone does not mean accepting behaviour that has harmed you or placing yourself at further risk.

Crime, Gambling Harm and the Criminal Justice System

If You Have Been Harmed by Someone's Gambling-Related Behaviour

If you have experienced financial abuse, theft, fraud, coercion, or any other form of harm linked to someone's gambling, your experiences deserve recognition and support.

You do not have to minimise what has happened because the person was struggling with gambling.

Both things can be true:

- Someone may be experiencing gambling harm.
- Their actions may have caused harm to others.

Your wellbeing and safety matter.

Isolation and Loneliness

One of the most common experiences reported by affected others is isolation.

You may feel unable to talk about what is happening because:

- You want to protect someone's privacy.
- You feel embarrassed.
- You worry about judgement.
- You are unsure who to trust.
- Nobody in your life understands.

Keeping everything to yourself can increase feelings of loneliness and distress.

Many people describe an immense sense of relief when they finally speak to someone who understands gambling harm.

The Impact on LGBTQ+ Communities

For LGBTQ+ affected others, there can be additional complexities.

You may already be navigating experiences such as:

- Minority stress.
- Discrimination.
- Family rejection.
- Social isolation.
- Mental health challenges.
- Limited access to LGBTQ+ affirming support.

For some people, the relationship affected by gambling may be a chosen family relationship rather than a biological one.

The impact of gambling harm can be just as significant regardless of the type of relationship involved.

At Recover with Pride, we recognise that LGBTQ+ lives, relationships, and support networks are diverse, and our approach reflects this.



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Legacy Harms for Affected Others

Even when gambling has stopped, the effects do not always disappear immediately. Many affected others experience what are sometimes called legacy harms.

These can include:

- Ongoing anxiety about finances.
- Difficulty trusting again.
- Relationship challenges.
- Emotional exhaustion.
- Hypervigilance around money.
- Fear of relapse.
- Reduced confidence.
- Ongoing concerns linked to criminal justice involvement.
- Family disruption following court proceedings or imprisonment.
- Feelings of shame or stigma.
- Challenges rebuilding stability and safety.

Recovery is often a process for affected others as well as the person who experienced gambling harm.

Healing takes time, and support can still be valuable long after gambling behaviour has changed.

Recognising When You Need Support

You may benefit from support if:

- Gambling is affecting your wellbeing.
- You feel emotionally overwhelmed.
- You are struggling with trust.
- You feel isolated.
- You are experiencing financial stress.
- You have been affected by gambling-related crime or criminal justice involvement.
- You need space to talk about your experiences.
- You are unsure what to do next.

You do not need to wait until things become unmanageable.

Seeking support early can help reduce the impact gambling harm has on your life.

Looking After Yourself

When someone you care about is struggling, it can feel natural to put all your energy into helping them.

However, your needs matter too.

Consider:

- Making time for activities you enjoy.
- Maintaining social connections.
- Talking to trusted people.
- Setting healthy boundaries.
- Seeking support for yourself.
- Remembering that you cannot control another person's choices.

Looking after yourself is not giving up on someone else.

It is recognising your own value and wellbeing.

How Recover with Pride Can Help

At Recover with Pride, we understand that gambling harm affects more than the person who gambles.

We provide an inclusive, non-judgemental space where affected others can:

- Explore their experiences.
- Better understand gambling harm.
- Reflect on the impact gambling has had on them.
- Develop healthy coping strategies.
- Build confidence and resilience.
- Reduce feelings of isolation.
- Access supportive resources and peer connections.

You do not need to carry this alone.



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Key Takeaway

If someone else's gambling has affected your emotional wellbeing, relationships, finances, safety, or led to involvement with the criminal justice system, your experience matters.

Being an affected other can be challenging, exhausting, and isolating, but you are not alone. Support is available, and recovery is possible for you too.

Key Message

Gambling harm does not only affect the person gambling. If someone else's gambling has impacted your wellbeing, relationships, finances, safety, or sense of security, you deserve support too. Your experiences are valid, and help is available for affected others at every stage of the journey.

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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