



Reducing Isolation and Secrecy

You Don't Have to Carry This Alone



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You Don't Have to Carry This Alone

One of the most common experiences reported by affected others is feeling completely alone.

Many people describe standing in a room full of family, friends, colleagues, or community members and feeling as though nobody truly knows what they are going through.

Gambling harm often exists behind closed doors. It can be hidden for months or years before it comes to light. Even after it is discovered, many affected others continue carrying the burden in silence.

You may be worried about protecting the person you care about, feel embarrassed about what has happened, or fear that others will not understand. Over time, this secrecy can increase feelings of isolation, stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion.

At Recover with Pride, we want you to know that you are not alone, and you do not have to manage the impact of gambling harm by yourself.



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Why Gambling Harm Can Feel So Isolating

Unlike some other issues, gambling harm is often invisible.

Friends and family may not see:

- The stress you are carrying.
- The sleepless nights.
- The financial worries.
- The difficult conversations.
- The impact on your confidence and wellbeing.

Many affected others continue attending work, caring for family members, and meeting daily responsibilities whilst quietly struggling with the impact of someone else's gambling.

As a result, people often feel that nobody understands what they are experiencing.

The Role of Secrecy

Secrecy is one of the most common features of gambling harm.

Sometimes secrecy begins with the person who is gambling.

Sometimes affected others also feel pressured to keep things hidden.

You may tell yourself:

- "I don't want people to judge them."
- "What if people think badly of our family?"
- "I don't want to embarrass anyone."
- "It's not my story to tell."
- "Nobody would understand."

Whilst these thoughts are understandable, carrying everything alone can become overwhelming.

Shame Grows in Silence

Many affected others experience feelings of shame.

You may feel embarrassed about:

- Financial difficulties.
- Being lied to.
- Not recognising the signs sooner.
- The impact gambling has had on your life.

It is important to remember:

Gambling harm is not a reflection of your worth.

You did not cause someone else's gambling.

You are not responsible for another person's actions.

Needing support is not something to be ashamed of.

When we keep difficult experiences hidden, shame often becomes stronger.

Talking about what has happened can help reduce that burden.

You Are Not Betraying Someone by Seeking Support

Some affected others worry that talking about their experiences means betraying the person they care about.

They may feel:

- Guilty discussing the situation.
- Worried about breaking trust.
- Concerned about exposing private information.

Seeking support for yourself is not an act of betrayal.

You are allowed to acknowledge your own experiences.

You are allowed to talk about how gambling harm has affected you.

You are allowed to seek support even if the person gambling has not asked for help themselves.

Your wellbeing matters too.

The Impact of Isolation

Isolation can affect many different areas of your life.

Over time, you may experience:

- Increased anxiety.
- Low mood.
- Reduced confidence.
- Emotional exhaustion.
- Feelings of helplessness.
- Loneliness.
- Difficulty trusting others.
- Increased stress.

Many affected others describe feeling that their world gradually becomes smaller.

They may stop seeing friends, withdraw from social activities, or avoid conversations because they feel ashamed or do not know what to say.

This can unintentionally increase the impact gambling harm has on their wellbeing.

Reaching Out Can Be Difficult

For many people, the hardest part is taking the first step.

You may worry that:

- Nobody will understand.
- You will be judged.
- People will blame you.
- Others will dismiss your experiences.

Whilst these fears are understandable, many affected others describe feeling a huge sense of relief when they finally speak openly with someone they trust.

You do not need to share everything at once.

Sometimes simply saying:

"I'm struggling with something and I need somebody to talk to."

Can be enough.

Choosing Who to Talk To

Not everyone needs to know what is happening.
Instead, consider who feels safe and trustworthy.

This might include:

- A friend.
- A family member.
- A chosen family member.
- A colleague.
- A community member.
- A support worker.
- A coach.
- A peer support group.

The goal is not to tell everybody.

The goal is to ensure you are not carrying everything alone.

The Importance of Peer Support

Many affected others find comfort in speaking to people who have had similar experiences.

Peer support can help by:

- Reducing feelings of isolation.
- Helping people feel understood.
- Providing reassurance.
- Sharing practical coping strategies.
- Offering hope and encouragement.

There can be something incredibly powerful about hearing someone say:

"I've experienced that too."

Knowing you are not alone can be an important part of recovery.

LGBTQ+ Isolation and Gambling Harm

For LGBTQ+ affected others, feelings of isolation can sometimes be even more complex.

You may already be dealing with experiences such as:

- Minority stress.
- Discrimination.
- Family rejection.
- Limited support networks.
- Concerns about confidentiality.
- Fear of being judged or misunderstood.

In some communities, concerns about privacy and being "outed" can create additional barriers to seeking support.

This can be particularly challenging in smaller communities where people may feel highly visible.

At Recover with Pride, we understand these concerns and aim to provide a safe, inclusive, and affirming space for people to explore their experiences.



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Chosen Family Matters Too

Within LGBTQ+ communities, support does not always come from biological relatives. For many people, chosen family relationships are some of the most important relationships in their lives.

If you are:

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

And someone's gambling has affected you, your experiences are valid. You do not need to be a partner, spouse, parent, or sibling to deserve support.

Social Media and Online Communities

Some affected others find comfort through online communities or digital support spaces.

These can:

- Reduce feelings of loneliness.
- Provide access to lived experience perspectives.
- Increase understanding of gambling harm.
- Help people feel connected.

However, it is also important to ensure that online spaces feel safe, supportive, and respectful.

Not every online space will be right for everyone.

Choose communities that align with your needs and wellbeing.

Recovery Begins With Connection

One of the most powerful ways to reduce isolation is through connection.
Connection might look different for everyone.

For some people it means:

- Talking to a trusted friend.
- Accessing support.
- Attending a peer group.
- Joining a community activity.
- Reconnecting with hobbies and interests.

For others, it may simply mean recognising that they do not have to cope alone anymore.

Recovery often begins when secrecy starts to reduce and connection starts to grow.

What If You're Not Ready to Talk?

Not everybody feels ready to share their experiences straight away.

That is okay.

Recovery is not a race.

You may want to start by:

- Reading information about gambling harm.
- Learning about affected other experiences.
- Reflecting on your own wellbeing.
- Accessing confidential support.
- Speaking to one trusted person.

The important thing is recognising that support is available whenever you feel ready.

How Recover with Pride Can Help

At Recover with Pride, we understand how isolating gambling harm can be for affected others.

We provide a safe, confidential, and LGBTQ+ affirming environment where you can:

- Explore your experiences.
- Better understand gambling harm.
- Connect with support.
- Reduce feelings of isolation.
- Build confidence and resilience.
- Focus on your own wellbeing and recovery.

You do not need to wait until things reach crisis point to seek support.



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Key Takeaway

Isolation and secrecy can make gambling harm feel even heavier to carry.

Whilst it may feel easier to manage things alone, connection, support, and understanding can play an important role in recovery and wellbeing.

Remember:

You do not have to protect everyone else at the expense of yourself. You do not have to carry this alone. Support is available, and your experiences matter too.

Key Message

Secrecy can increase isolation, but connection can reduce it. Reaching out for support is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign that you recognise your wellbeing matters too.

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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