



What If They Don't Want Help?

When the Person You Care About
Isn't Ready to Change



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When the Person You Care About Isn't Ready to Change

One of the most difficult experiences for affected others is recognising that someone is struggling with gambling harm, whilst they continue to deny, minimise, or avoid the issue.

You may feel frustrated because you can clearly see the impact gambling is having on their life, your relationship, finances, or wider family. You may have had multiple conversations, offered support, shared resources, and expressed concern, only to feel as though nothing is changing.

Many affected others describe this as one of the most painful parts of their journey.

At Recover with Pride, we understand how difficult it can be when someone you care about is not ready to acknowledge their gambling or seek support.

The most important thing to remember is this:

You cannot force somebody into recovery.

Recognising the Reality of the Situation

When someone is experiencing gambling harm, they may:

- Deny there is a problem.
- Downplay the impact.
- Make excuses.
- Blame other people.
- Avoid conversations.
- Refuse support.
- Promise change without taking action.
- Become defensive when concerns are raised.

This can be incredibly upsetting, particularly when the consequences seem obvious to everyone around them.

Recognising the Reality of the Situation

Many affected others find themselves trapped in a cycle of:

- Worrying.
- Trying to help.
- Feeling ignored.
- Becoming frustrated.
- Trying harder.
- Feeling exhausted.

Over time, this can take a significant toll on your own wellbeing.

Why Might Someone Refuse Help?

People avoid support for many different reasons.

Some may feel:

Shame

Many people experiencing gambling harm feel ashamed of what has happened.

They may worry about:

- Being judged.
- Letting people down.
- Losing relationships.
- Admitting the extent of financial difficulties.

Ironically, shame can sometimes prevent someone from seeking the very support that could help them.

Fear

They may fear:

- Facing the consequences.
- Discussing debt.
- Telling the truth.
- Losing trust.
- Changing established habits.

For some people, acknowledging gambling harm can feel overwhelming.

Denial

Some individuals genuinely do not believe their gambling is causing significant harm.

They may compare themselves to others and think:

- "I'm not that bad."
- "I can stop whenever I want."
- "Things aren't out of control."
- "Everyone gambles."

Denial can make meaningful conversations challenging.

Feeling Hopeless

Sometimes people recognise the harm but feel incapable of changing.

They may believe:

- The situation is beyond repair.
- They have already caused too much damage.
- Recovery isn't possible.

In these situations, support often begins with hope.

It Is Not Your Job to Convince Them

Many affected others spend months or years trying to persuade somebody to seek help.

You may find yourself:

- Repeating the same conversations.
- Constantly checking up on them.
- Searching for the perfect thing to say.
- Feeling responsible for motivating them.

Whilst these reactions are understandable, they can also be exhausting.

Recovery is most likely to happen when somebody chooses to engage in change themselves.

You cannot make somebody seek support before they are ready.

Focus on What You Can Control

When someone refuses help, it can be useful to shift your focus from their behaviour to your own wellbeing.

Ask yourself:

- What do I need right now?
- What support is available to me?
- What boundaries do I need?
- How is this affecting my wellbeing?
- What aspects of the situation can I control?

This shift is not about giving up.

It is about recognising where your energy can have the greatest impact.

Avoid Falling Into the Rescuer Role

Affected others often find themselves becoming rescuers.

This may involve:

- Paying debts repeatedly.
- Solving every crisis.
- Covering up consequences.
- Making excuses for behaviour.
- Taking responsibility for things that are not yours to carry.

Whilst these actions are usually motivated by love and concern, they can sometimes prevent the person from experiencing the consequences of their behaviour.

Supporting somebody and rescuing somebody are not always the same thing.

Setting Clear Boundaries

If someone is refusing support, healthy boundaries become even more important.

Boundaries may include:

- Not lending money.
- Not paying gambling-related debts.
- Refusing abusive or manipulative behaviour.
- Protecting your savings.
- Limiting financial risk.
- Prioritising your wellbeing.

Boundaries are not punishments.

They are a way of protecting yourself from further harm.

Managing Your Expectations

One of the hardest realities for affected others is accepting that change may not happen immediately.

You may have hoped that:

- One conversation would make a difference.
- Discovering the harm would prompt change.
- A crisis would become a turning point.

Sometimes that happens.

Sometimes it does not.

Recovery is often a process rather than a single decision.

Whilst this can feel frustrating, it does not mean future change is impossible.

Looking After Your Wellbeing

When someone continues gambling or refuses support, it is common for affected others to put their own needs on hold.

You may feel:

- Exhausted.
- Anxious.
- Angry.
- Isolated.
- Defeated.
- Constantly on edge.

These feelings deserve attention.

Looking After Your Wellbeing

Looking after yourself may include:

- Talking to trusted people.
- Accessing support.
- Taking breaks from difficult conversations.
- Maintaining hobbies and interests.
- Protecting your physical and emotional wellbeing.
- Building supportive connections.

You matter too.



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When Relationships Become Harmful

Sometimes gambling harm can lead to behaviours that impact safety and wellbeing.

This may include:

- Financial abuse.
- Coercion.
- Manipulation.
- Emotional abuse.
- Threatening behaviour.
- Criminal activity.

If this is happening, your safety must be the priority.

You do not have to tolerate harmful behaviour because somebody is struggling with gambling.

Both things can be true:

- Someone may be experiencing gambling harm.
- Their behaviour may be causing harm to others.

Support is available in these situations.

Gambling Harm, Crime and Consequences

Some affected others continue trying to protect someone from consequences linked to gambling-related crime.

This may involve:

- Theft.
- Fraud.
- Financial deception.
- Police involvement.
- Court proceedings.

Whilst wanting to support someone is understandable, it is important to remember that accountability is a necessary part of recovery.

Protecting yourself and your family is not a betrayal.

It is an act of self-care and responsibility.

LGBTQ+ Considerations

Within LGBTQ+ communities, additional fears may exist around:

- Confidentiality.
- Community judgement.
- Being outed.
- Stigma.
- Previous negative experiences of support services.

These concerns can sometimes make it harder for individuals to engage with help.

It can also make affected others feel particularly isolated.

Remember that support is available for you regardless of whether the person gambling chooses to engage.

You Can Still Get Support

One of the most important messages in this guidance is that support is not dependent on somebody else's choices.

You do not have to wait for them to:

- Admit there is a problem.
- Ask for help.
- Engage with treatment.
- Stop gambling.

You can seek support today.

In fact, many affected others find that accessing support helps them feel more confident, informed, and resilient regardless of what happens next.

What Hope Can Look Like

Hope does not have to mean believing everything will be fixed tomorrow.

Sometimes hope means:

- Protecting your wellbeing.
- Building healthy boundaries.
- Finding support.
- Reducing isolation.
- Recognising your own strengths.
- Accepting what you cannot control.

Recovery may begin with the person gambling, but healing can begin for affected others at any time.

How Recover with Pride Can Help

At Recover with Pride, we understand how painful it can be when someone you care about is not ready to seek support.

We can help you:

- Understand gambling harm.
- Explore your options.
- Build healthy boundaries.
- Manage difficult emotions.
- Reduce isolation.
- Focus on your own wellbeing and recovery.

You do not have to wait for somebody else to change before getting support yourself.



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Key Takeaway

When somebody you care about refuses help, it can leave you feeling powerless, frustrated, and heartbroken.

However, their decision does not prevent you from protecting yourself, seeking support, or beginning your own recovery.

Remember:

You cannot force somebody to change. You cannot recover on their behalf. But you can look after yourself, set healthy boundaries, and access the support you deserve.

Key Message

You do not have to wait for somebody else to seek help before seeking support yourself. Your wellbeing matters, regardless of where they are in their 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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