



What To Do When You Discover Someone Is Gambling

A Practical Guide for
Affected Others



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A Practical Guide for Affected Others

Discovering that someone you care about is experiencing gambling harm can be shocking, confusing, and overwhelming.

You may have found evidence of gambling unexpectedly. Perhaps you noticed unusual financial transactions, uncovered hidden debts, received a call from a creditor, or had someone disclose their gambling to you directly.

Many affected others describe this moment as a turning point. It can bring a flood of emotions, including fear, anger, sadness, confusion, betrayal, and uncertainty about what to do next.

If you have recently discovered someone is gambling, it is important to remember that you do not need to have all the answers immediately.

This guidance is designed to help you navigate those first days and weeks whilst protecting your own wellbeing.

First Things First: Take a Breath

When we discover something unexpected and alarming, it is natural to want immediate answers.

You may feel the urge to:

- Demand explanations.
- Solve the problem straight away.
- Check every financial record.
- Make ultimatums.
- Take responsibility for fixing everything.

Whilst these reactions are understandable, it can help to pause before making major decisions.

You have just received important information and may need time to process what it means.

You do not have to solve everything today.

Remember: This Is Not Your Fault

Many affected others immediately start questioning themselves.

You may wonder:

- How did I not see this?
- Should I have noticed sooner?
- Have I failed them?
- Could I have prevented this?

The answer is no.

Gambling harm often develops in secrecy, and many people become highly skilled at hiding their behaviour.

You are not responsible for another person's gambling.

Stay Calm If Possible

This can be difficult, particularly if you have discovered significant financial losses, deception, or repeated dishonesty.

However, if someone has disclosed their gambling to you, they may already be feeling significant shame, fear, and anxiety.

Whilst difficult conversations may be necessary, approaching them calmly often creates more opportunity for honest discussion.

This does not mean you should ignore your feelings.

It simply means trying to create space for a constructive conversation rather than an argument that leaves everyone feeling unheard.

What Might Be Helpful to Say

If someone has disclosed gambling harm, consider responses such as:

- "Thank you for telling me."
- "That must have been difficult to talk about."
- "I'm glad you've shared this with me."
- "Let's take this one step at a time."
- "How can we begin to understand what's going on?"
- "What support have you considered?"

You do not need to minimise the impact of what has happened, but showing a willingness to listen can help keep communication open.

What Might Not Be Helpful

When emotions are running high, it is understandable to say things in frustration.

However, statements such as:

- "Why don't you just stop?"
- "How could you do this to us?"
- "You've ruined everything."
- "I can't believe anything you say."

May increase shame and defensiveness, making future conversations more difficult.

This does not mean your anger is invalid.

It means that timing and approach often matter.

There will be opportunities to discuss the impact of gambling and the harm it has caused.

Try to Understand the Situation

Before making decisions, it can be helpful to understand the extent of what is happening.

Questions may include:

- How long has gambling been happening?
- What forms of gambling are involved?
- How much money has been spent or lost?
- Are there debts?
- Has money been borrowed?
- Are there any immediate financial risks?
- Is anyone else's money involved?
- Has any criminal behaviour taken place?

You may not receive all the answers straight away.

Many people disclose gambling gradually as trust develops.

Look After Your Immediate Wellbeing

In the early stages, it is easy to become fully focused on the other person. However, your wellbeing matters too.

Consider:

- Eating regularly.
- Getting rest where possible.
- Speaking to someone you trust.
- Taking time to process your emotions.
- Seeking support for yourself.

You do not need to carry this alone.

Protecting Household Finances

Where appropriate, you may need to consider practical financial steps.

This could include:

- Reviewing household budgets.
- Understanding any debts.
- Checking joint financial arrangements.
- Monitoring shared accounts.
- Seeking independent financial advice where needed.

The purpose of these actions is not punishment.

It is about protecting financial wellbeing and ensuring informed decisions can be made moving forward.

Establishing Boundaries

Discovering gambling harm often highlights the importance of boundaries.

Boundaries may include:

- Not lending further money.
- Agreeing financial transparency.
- Protecting personal savings.
- Deciding what support you can realistically provide.
- Communicating expectations clearly.

Healthy boundaries are not about controlling another person.

They are about protecting your own wellbeing and safety.

If Criminal Behaviour Has Been Discovered

In some situations, gambling harm may involve:

- Theft.
- Fraud.
- Financial abuse.
- Taking money without permission.
- Illegal activity undertaken to fund gambling.

If this has happened, it is important to acknowledge the impact on you. You may feel shocked, betrayed, frightened, or unsure how to proceed.

Remember:

- Criminal behaviour is the responsibility of the person who committed it.
- Gambling harm does not excuse harmful actions.
- Your safety and wellbeing matter.
- Support is available for affected others impacted by gambling-related crime.

You may wish to seek specialist legal, financial, or safeguarding advice depending on your circumstances.

If Children Are Involved

Where children are affected, their wellbeing should remain a priority.

Children do not need to know every detail of a situation, but they may notice:

- Changes in mood.
- Financial stress.
- Increased conflict.
- Changes in routines.

Providing reassurance, stability, and age-appropriate communication can be helpful.

If safeguarding concerns exist, seek appropriate professional support.

What If They Refuse Support?

Not everyone is ready to acknowledge gambling harm immediately.

Some people may:

- Minimise concerns.
- Deny problems.
- Become defensive.
- Refuse support options.

This can be frustrating and painful.

If someone refuses support:

- Focus on what you can control.
- Protect your own wellbeing.
- Maintain healthy boundaries.
- Continue expressing concern where appropriate.
- Seek support for yourself.

You do not need to wait for them to seek help before accessing support yourself.

Recognising LGBTQ+ Experiences

Within LGBTQ+ communities, there may be additional concerns when gambling harm is disclosed.

These can include:

- Fear of judgement.
- Concerns about confidentiality.
- Experiences of discrimination.
- Limited family support.
- Reliance on chosen family networks.

It is also important to remember that affected others may not identify as LGBTQ+ themselves but may be supporting an LGBTQ+ loved one.

Recover with Pride welcomes anyone affected by gambling harm within LGBTQ+ communities, including partners, parents, family members, friends, and chosen family.

You Do Not Have to Become Their Counsellor

Many affected others take on the role of:

- Problem-solver.
- Financial manager.
- Investigator.
- Emotional support person.
- Crisis responder.

While support is important, it is not your responsibility to become their counsellor, coach, or recovery worker.

Recovery works best when responsibility is shared with appropriate support services and professionals.

You deserve support too.



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Sometimes Recovery Starts With Honesty

For many people, disclosure is the beginning of change.

Whilst discovering gambling harm can be distressing, honesty creates an opportunity to move forward.

Recovery often starts when secrecy begins to end.

That does not mean immediate trust or forgiveness.

It means that understanding, support, and positive change become possible.



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How Recover with Pride Can Help

At Recover with Pride, we provide a safe, inclusive and non-judgemental space for affected others.

We can help you:

- Understand gambling harm.
- Explore how gambling has affected you.
- Develop healthy boundaries.
- Rebuild confidence and wellbeing.
- Reduce feelings of isolation.
- Access appropriate support and resources.

You do not need to face this situation alone.



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Key Takeaway

Discovering someone is gambling can feel overwhelming, but you do not need to have all the answers immediately.

Take time to understand what is happening, protect your wellbeing, establish healthy boundaries, and remember that support is available for you as well as the person gambling.

Most importantly:

You did not cause the gambling, you cannot control the gambling, and you do not have to manage it alone.

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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