



When Gambling Harm and Crime Intersect

A Guide for Affected Others



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A Guide for Affected Others

When people think about gambling harm, they often think about debt, relationship difficulties, and emotional wellbeing.

However, for some individuals, gambling harm can also become linked to criminal behaviour and involvement with the criminal justice system.

For affected others, this can be one of the most distressing and complex experiences they face.

You may be trying to cope with:

- The impact of gambling.
- The shock of discovering criminal behaviour.
- Police involvement.
- Court proceedings.
- Financial losses.
- Family disruption.
- Concerns about imprisonment.
- Feelings of shame, anger, and betrayal.

At Recover with Pride, we want affected others to know that they are not alone. Support is available, and it is possible to navigate these experiences whilst protecting your own wellbeing.

Gambling Harm and Criminal Behaviour

Not everyone who experiences gambling harm becomes involved in crime.

However, for some people, gambling-related difficulties can contribute to behaviours such as:

- Theft.
- Fraud.
- Financial deception.
- Embezzlement.
- Taking money from friends or family.
- Misusing joint finances.
- Accessing money without permission.
- Accumulating debts that may lead to legal consequences.

Many affected others are shocked when they discover the extent of what has happened.

Often, the gambling itself may have been hidden for a long period, meaning criminal behaviour is uncovered at the same time.

The Shock of Discovery

Many affected others describe feeling as though the ground has been pulled from beneath them.

You may experience:

- Disbelief.
- Confusion.
- Anger.
- Betrayal.
- Fear.
- Helplessness.

You might ask:

- How could this happen?
- Why didn't I notice?
- Who else has been affected?
- What happens next?

These reactions are entirely understandable.

Discovering criminal behaviour alongside gambling harm can be overwhelming.

Understanding Without Excusing

Affected others often struggle with two competing realities.

On the one hand, you may understand that gambling harm has played a role in what happened.

On the other hand, you may feel deeply hurt by the actions that have occurred.

It is important to recognise:

Understanding gambling harm does not mean excusing harmful behaviour.

Both things can be true:

- Someone may have been struggling with gambling harm.
- Their actions may have caused real harm to others.

Accountability remains important.

Common Emotions Experienced by Affected Others

When gambling harm and crime intersect, emotions can become particularly intense.

Anger

You may feel angry about:

- The dishonesty.
- The impact on your family.
- Financial losses.
- Broken trust.

Betrayal

Many affected others feel deeply betrayed, particularly when money has been taken from family members, friends, or shared finances.

Common Emotions Experienced by Affected Others

Shame

Some people worry about what others will think.

You may fear judgement from:

- Family.
- Friends.
- Colleagues.
- Community members.

Remember: you are not responsible for somebody else's actions.

Fear

You may worry about:

- Court outcomes.
- Financial consequences.
- Imprisonment.
- Housing stability.
- Future relationships.

These concerns are understandable and deserve support.

When the Police Become Involved

For many affected others, police involvement can feel frightening.

You may find yourself navigating:

- Interviews.
- Statements.
- Investigations.
- Safeguarding processes.
- Criminal proceedings.

It is important to remember that seeking support for yourself during this period does not mean you are abandoning the person involved.

You are entitled to support whilst events unfold.

Going Through the Court Process

Court proceedings can be emotionally exhausting.

Affected others often describe:

- Long periods of uncertainty.
- Anxiety waiting for hearings.
- Concerns about publicity.
- Worry about sentencing outcomes.
- Emotional exhaustion.

It can help to focus on what you can control rather than trying to predict outcomes.
Seeking support during this period can reduce feelings of isolation and overwhelm.

If Someone Is Sentenced or Imprisoned

When somebody receives a custodial sentence, affected others can experience mixed emotions.

You may feel:

- Sadness.
- Relief.
- Guilt.
- Anger.
- Worry.
- Grief.

It is common to care deeply about somebody whilst also recognising the seriousness of their actions.

These emotions can coexist.

There is no "correct" way to feel.

Protecting Yourself Financially

If criminal behaviour has involved finances, it is important to consider your own protection.

This may involve:

- Reviewing bank accounts.
- Protecting savings.
- Seeking financial advice.
- Understanding liabilities.
- Establishing financial boundaries.

Protecting yourself is not an act of disloyalty.

It is a sensible and important step.

What If the Person Took Money from Me?

Many affected others struggle particularly when they have been directly harmed.

You may have experienced:

- Theft.
- Financial abuse.
- Borrowing under false pretences.
- Fraud.

This often creates additional feelings of:

- Violation.
- Hurt.
- Resentment.
- Loss of trust.

It is important to recognise that being a victim of these actions does not disappear because the person was experiencing gambling harm.

Your experiences are valid.

Your wellbeing matters.

Families, Relationships and Divided Loyalties

Families can sometimes experience conflict following criminal justice involvement.

Some people may want to:

- Continue offering support.
- Distance themselves.
- Focus on accountability.
- Protect the family.

Different family members often cope in different ways.

Try to avoid judging yourself or others for responding differently.

There is no single "right" response.

LGBTQ+ Considerations

Within LGBTQ+ communities, people may experience additional concerns around:

- Confidentiality.
- Community reputation.
- Being judged.
- Being outed.
- Losing support networks.

In smaller communities, concerns about visibility and privacy can feel particularly significant.

It is important to remember:

You deserve support that is confidential, respectful, and affirming.

Healing After Criminal Justice Involvement

Even after investigations, court proceedings, or imprisonment have ended, the impact may remain.

Affected others may continue to experience:

- Anxiety.
- Hypervigilance.
- Financial worries.
- Shame.
- Relationship difficulties.
- Legacy harms.

Healing often takes time.

Recovery is not only about the person who gambled.

Affected others need support too.

Rebuilding Trust

Where relationships continue, rebuilding trust is often a gradual process.

Trust may need to be rebuilt through:

- Accountability.
- Honesty.
- Transparency.
- Consistent actions.
- Respect for boundaries.

There is no obligation to trust somebody immediately.

Trust should be rebuilt at a pace that feels safe for you.

Looking After Yourself

Throughout this process, try to remember:

- You did not cause the gambling.
- You did not cause the criminal behaviour.
- You are not responsible for fixing everything.
- Your wellbeing matters.
- You deserve support.

Many affected others spend so much time worrying about the person who gambled that they neglect their own needs.

You matter too.



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How Recover with Pride Can Help

At Recover with Pride, we understand that gambling harm can have far-reaching consequences for affected others, including involvement with the criminal justice system.

We provide a safe, non-judgemental and LGBTQ+ affirming space where affected others can:

- Explore their experiences.
- Process difficult emotions.
- Understand legacy harms.
- Develop healthy boundaries.
- Rebuild confidence and resilience.
- Reduce isolation.
- Focus on their own wellbeing and recovery.



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Key Takeaway

When gambling harm and crime intersect, affected others often carry a significant emotional, practical, and financial burden.

You may be dealing with betrayal, fear, court proceedings, financial losses, or ongoing uncertainty.

Most importantly, remember:

You can care about somebody whilst also recognising the harm that has occurred. You can support somebody whilst maintaining boundaries. And you can seek support for yourself regardless of where they are in their journey.

Key Message

Gambling harm does not excuse criminal behaviour, but it can help explain some of the circumstances that led to it. If you have been affected by gambling-related crime, your experiences deserve recognition, support, and compassion 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

recovertogogether.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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