



When Gambling Harm and Domestic Abuse Intersect

Understanding Safe Relationships,
Choice and Control



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Understanding Safe Relationships, Choice and Control

For some affected others, gambling harm exists alongside behaviours that go beyond gambling itself.

Whilst not everyone affected by gambling harm will experience abuse, some people may find that gambling is linked with patterns of:

- Coercion.
- Control.
- Financial abuse.
- Emotional abuse.
- Intimidation.
- Manipulation.
- Threats.
- Isolation.

These experiences can be confusing because people are often trying to understand where gambling harm ends and where abusive behaviour begins.

At Recover with Pride, we believe it is important to talk openly about these issues and make clear that gambling harm does not excuse abusive behaviour.

Everyone deserves to feel safe, respected, and supported.

Gambling Harm Does Not Cause Domestic Abuse

It is important to be clear:

Gambling harm does not cause somebody to become abusive.

Many people experience gambling harm but never become abusive.

However, gambling harm can sometimes exist alongside abusive behaviours, and in some situations gambling-related difficulties may be used to justify, minimise, or excuse harmful behaviour.

Abuse is always the responsibility of the person choosing to behave in that way.

What Is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse can happen between:

- Partners.
- Ex-partners.
- Family members.
- People who live together.
- People in intimate relationships.

Domestic abuse is not always physical.

It can include:

Emotional Abuse

- Constant criticism.
- Blame.
- Manipulation.
- Humiliation.
- Intimidation.

What Is Domestic Abuse?

Financial Abuse

- Taking money without permission.
- Controlling access to finances.
- Creating debt in somebody else's name.
- Pressuring someone for money.
- Hiding financial information.

Coercive or Controlling Behaviour

- Monitoring someone's activities.
- Isolating them from family and friends.
- Making threats.
- Restricting independence.
- Creating fear.

Digital Abuse

- Monitoring devices.
- Accessing accounts without permission.
- Tracking online activity.

Gambling Harm and Financial Abuse

One of the most common ways affected others experience harm is through financial abuse.

You may have experienced:

- Repeated pressure to lend money.
- Money being taken without consent.
- Joint accounts being misused.
- Savings disappearing.
- Debts being hidden.
- Financial decisions being made without your knowledge.

Many affected others initially describe these experiences as "part of the gambling." Over time, they realise that they have also been subjected to financial abuse.

Signs That a Relationship May Not Be Healthy

Consider whether you are experiencing any of the following:

- Feeling frightened of someone's reactions.
- Being pressured to give money.
- Hiding financial concerns from others.
- Feeling unable to say no.
- Walking on eggshells.
- Being blamed for somebody else's gambling.
- Being made responsible for somebody else's recovery.
- Feeling controlled or manipulated.

If any of these feel familiar, additional support may be helpful.

"If I Don't Help, Things Will Get Worse"

Many affected others feel trapped.

You may worry that:

- Refusing money will make things worse.
- Setting boundaries will cause conflict.
- Reporting concerns will destroy a relationship.
- Looking after yourself is selfish.

These fears are understandable.

However, being pressured into doing things that leave you feeling unsafe, frightened, or financially vulnerable is not healthy support.

When Love and Fear Exist Together

One of the reasons domestic abuse can be difficult to identify is that relationships are often complex.

You may:

- Love somebody deeply.
- Want them to recover.
- Feel sorry for them.
- Understand their struggles.

Whilst also feeling:

- Frightened.
- Controlled.
- Manipulated.
- Hurt.

These experiences can exist at the same time.

Having compassion for somebody's difficulties does not mean accepting harmful behaviour.

LGBTQ+ Experiences of Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse can occur in:

- Same-gender relationships.
- Relationships involving trans people.
- Relationships involving non-binary people.
- Family relationships.
- Former relationships.

Unfortunately, some LGBTQ+ people may struggle to seek support because they fear:

- Being judged.
- Not being believed.
- Being outed.
- Services not understanding LGBTQ+ relationships.

These concerns can make abuse even harder to identify and disclose.

Domestic abuse is never acceptable, regardless of the genders or identities of those involved.

When Gambling Is Used as an Excuse

Some affected others hear statements like:

- "It's because of the gambling."
- "I wasn't thinking clearly."
- "I only did it because I was desperate."

Whilst gambling harm may provide context, it does not remove responsibility.

Understanding somebody's struggles does not mean accepting harmful behaviour.

Both things can be true:

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

Protecting Yourself

If you are concerned about your safety or wellbeing, consider:

- Speaking to somebody you trust.
- Accessing specialist support.
- Protecting your finances.
- Keeping important documents safe.
- Seeking legal advice where appropriate.
- Developing a safety plan if needed.

You do not need to wait for a situation to become worse before seeking support.

Supporting Someone Whilst Maintaining Boundaries

You can:

- Encourage support.
- Show compassion.
- Offer information.
- Care about somebody's wellbeing.

Without:

- Tolerating abuse.
- Sacrificing your safety.
- Accepting harmful behaviour.
- Taking responsibility for their actions.

Healthy support includes healthy boundaries.

If You Are Unsure Whether What You're Experiencing Is Abuse

Many affected others are uncertain.

You may find yourself:

- Minimising what has happened.
- Comparing yourself to others.
- Wondering if you're overreacting.

If somebody's behaviour is making you feel unsafe, controlled, frightened, pressured, or isolated, it is worth talking it through with a trusted person or support service.

You do not have to work it out alone.

Recover with Pride and Additional Support

At Recover with Pride, we recognise that gambling harm can sometimes intersect with domestic abuse, financial abuse, and coercive control.

Whilst we can help you explore the impact of gambling harm, there may be times when additional specialist domestic abuse support would be beneficial.

Where appropriate, we can help signpost individuals to organisations with expertise in domestic abuse and safety planning.

Seeking specialist support is not a sign that you have failed.

It is a positive step towards protecting your wellbeing.



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Key Takeaway

Gambling harm and domestic abuse are not the same thing, but they can sometimes occur together.

You are entitled to:

- Safety.
- Respect.
- Boundaries.
- Financial security.
- Honest relationships.
- Support.

Most importantly:

You can care about somebody's gambling recovery whilst still recognising when their behaviour is harmful. Your wellbeing matters, and you never have to choose between supporting someone else and protecting yourself.

Key Message

No one should feel frightened, controlled, manipulated, or financially exploited because of somebody else's gambling. If gambling harm is affecting your safety or wellbeing, support is available, and you deserve to be heard.

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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