



Beacon Counselling Trust

Reg. Charity No 1148011

unionlearn



UCATT Conference

# report

November 2016

## Addressing problem gambling in the workplace?

**Estimates indicate that there are almost 600,000 problem gamblers in the UK, with ten times that number either at risk of, or affected by, problem gambling. Yet fewer than five per cent of UK employers currently have a workplace gambling policy.**



**UCATT Union Learning Fund (ULF) project coordinator Keith Lewis chaired the conference**

After a number of incidents, including one where a member lost his month's wages in just 30 minutes, construction union UCATT, in partnership with charities GamCare and Beacon Counselling Trust (BCT), decided it was time to organise the first ever national conference on problematic gambling in the workplace.

The event took place at Manchester Town Hall in November 2016 and aimed to raise awareness about the impact problematic gambling is having on both individuals and organisations. It brought together unions with employers, the gambling industry and support organisations to

discuss preventing problematic gambling, spreading good practice, and providing effective signposting to support and treatment services for those affected. It focussed particularly on the role of unions and learning and skills in the workplace.

*"Problematic gambling is a union issue, a learning and skills issue – it's our issue,"* said UCATT Union Learning Fund (ULF) project coordinator Keith Lewis. *"It's also one we are increasingly coming up against in the workplace and in local communities. But often by the time unions get involved it is too late – people are already facing disciplinaries and even dismissal. And many employers are not sure what to do about the problem."*

The conference, the first event of its kind, brought together around 60 delegates from stakeholder organisations to discuss how they could work together to better address problematic gambling in the workplace and start to move the issue up agendas.



**Far left: GambleAware Director of Operations and Development Iain Corby**



**Left: UCATT's Addressing problem gambling in the workplace? conference at Manchester Town Hall**

## What is problematic gambling?



**Beacon Counselling Trust Clinical Director Neil Platt**

**The UK gambling industry has grown over recent years. GambleAware Director of Operations and Development Iain Corby reported that in 2014/15 it made around £92 billion in gross profits and the latest Gambling Commission figures show that gamblers lost £13.6 billion in the year to March 2016, up from £11.3 billion the previous year.**

Taking part in gambling does not automatically cause harm. It is a huge social activity enjoyed by around 70% of the UK population, according to GambleAware, and many workers gamble socially during break time, for example, without developing a problem or affecting the workplace.

But problem gambling – behaviour related to gambling which causes harm to the gambler and

those around them – can reduce workplace productivity and affect the health and wellbeing of employees.

BCT Clinical Director Neil Platt says there are around 590,000 problem gamblers in the UK, with ten times that many either at risk of or affected by problem gambling, and he explained how recent developments in digital technology have changed the way people gamble.

*"Online gambling accessed via smartphones and tablets means people can access gambling around the clock from the palm of their hand,"* he said. *"This also means gambling in the workplace and during working hours is more possible than ever before, making businesses more vulnerable to the issues arising from problem gambling."*

# Who is at risk?

**Problem gambling can affect anyone at any age. It can affect men, women and people from different ethnic backgrounds and the causes are unclear, although there appears to be a relationship between family gambling behaviour, age and experiencing a big win early in a gambling career.**

**G**ambling is rarely found in isolation and problem gamblers often also experience alcohol and drug addiction, for example.

But there are few telltale signs and symptoms, which can make identifying an employee suffering from gambling-related harm difficult for co-workers and employers and it is often described as a 'hidden addiction'.

Although it is a problem across the board, research shows that:

- people with management responsibility are slightly more likely to gamble than those without this responsibility (45% compared with 39%), suggesting a link between stressful employment positions and gambling;

- shift work has been found to be a factor encouraging workers to gamble;
- 450,000 children are gambling in England and Wales every week. The Gambling Commission's Young People and Gambling Report also shows that around 9,000 of these are likely to be problem gamblers;
- those aged 24–35 are one of the most likely age groups to think about gambling while at work, gamble while at work online or via an app, or know someone negatively affected by gambling.

He pointed to construction, postal and communications and retail, as well as 'high achievers' and first responders such as the police and paramedics, as



**Addiction Recovery Agency Managing Director Graham England**

some of the sectors and occupations with a higher prevalence of problematic gambling. And Addiction Recovery Agency (ARA) Managing Director Graham England, who has carried out preventative work with young people (aged 14 to 25) before they enter the world of work, reported that the rate of problem gambling is over three times as high among young people than among adults in the UK.

## The impact of problematic gambling on individuals and businesses



**DS Brian Faint from Cheshire Constabulary (left) and Mitie Care and Custody Clinical Lead Dr Viz Reddy (right)**

**Problem gambling can result in debt, crime, family and employment relationship breakdown and it can also have a huge impact on mental health.**

**N**eil Platt pointed to a survey showing that 3% of British adults know someone who has lost their job because of gambling – more than a million people.

Consultancy EPIC Risk Management Chief Executive Paul Buck says that the typical debt of a compulsive or pathological gambler is £60,000. He himself racked up debts of £1.3 million through gambling (see next page) and he pointed out that problem gambling has the highest suicide, relapse, bankruptcy, co-morbidity (where there are one or more additional illnesses or disorders) and relationship breakdown rates of any addiction.

Detective Sergeant (DS) Brian Faint from Cheshire Constabulary Economic Crime Unit listed theft from family, friends and employers, criminal damage, cybercrime, fraud and money

laundering, domestic violence, serious and organised crime, serious assaults and even murder as the types of criminality that problematic gambling can lead to. And he said that employers risk breaches of data protection, access to and sale of sensitive information, security risks and damage to their reputation.

Mitie Care and Custody Clinical Lead Dr Viz Reddy pointed to international academic research highlighting problem gambling as a significant motivation for employee theft and supporting a relationship between problem gambling and financial crime. According to the BDO Fraud Track Report 2016, which includes frauds over £50,000 in the UK, shows that 12.5% (one in eight) of all frauds are now motivated by gambling and account for £225 million.

Meanwhile, according to the Reed in Partnership Report 2016, concentration and behaviour at work has been found to be affected by gambling, leading to a loss of productivity

## Is help at hand?

**The UCATT conference heard about the support available to individuals and employers affected by problematic gambling.**

**G**ambleAware is funded by the gambling industry and Iain Corby, set out that in addition to the harm minimisation research, prevention and education activities it carries out, it also funds the charity GamCare and the counselling and support services provided by GamCare partners like BCT, as well as the NHS National Problem Gambling Clinic and the Gordon Moody Association – which offers an intensive residential treatment programme for the most severely addicted gamblers.

Gamcare Chief Executive Officer Dirk Hansen explained that his organisation provides information, advice and support for anyone affected by problem gambling and its National Gambling HelpLine supports more than 40,000 people each year. It provides free face-to-face and online counselling throughout England, Scotland and Wales, runs education and prevention projects and offers training for industry and professionals.

It also funds and provides specialist training to 15 partner agencies who deliver GamCare counselling across England, Scotland and Wales, including BCT, which delivers Gamcare treatment provision across the North West and Wales.

These counselling services treat almost 7,000 people each year and aim to stop or reduce problematic gambling, develop ways of coping, understand some of the underlying issues in order to promote change, and address related issues that are causing harm or damage so that people affected by problematic gambling are able to live productive and healthy lives.



# Paul Buck's story

**Consultancy EPIC Risk Management Chief Executive Paul Buck described how he had become a problematic gambler and the consequences.**

Back in 1994 he was a young student and living away from home when he placed his first and successful bet on a horse race in a William Hill betting shop in Leeds. At odds of 33-1, he won £470. He then gambled regularly for the next 17 years, keeping his addiction hidden from his young family and his employers. He was even voted 'Boss of the Year', but his gambling was becoming increasingly out of control. Between 2001 and 2011, he gambled £4.8 million through 14,750 online transactions across 93 separate accounts and lost £1.3 million, £433,000 of which belonged to his financial services employer. After he eventually broke down and tried to kill

himself at his workplace, he finally admitted his gambling addiction and the scale of his debts. After handing himself in, he was arrested, bailed, sentenced and served 12 months of a 32-month jail sentence.

After his release, he founded EPIC to stop people getting into the position he found himself in. He now works with professional sport, the armed forces, the criminal justice system and financial services and others to help develop workplace gambling policies and 'fit for purpose' pathways to support for problematic gamblers.



## What can employers do?

**"Employers have a duty of care to their employees to ensure a safe environment to at work," EPIC Risk Management Chief Executive Paul Buck made clear. "The measures to provide this are the same as those that will mitigate the risks to the organisation in terms of reputation, brand and finance."**

He says that employers should have a Gambling at Work policy, but that currently fewer than five per cent of employers have one. They should also run education and awareness raising programmes and provide "fit for purpose" pathways of support. He also says that gambling should be included on an organisation's risk register and within its audit and compliance procedures.

GamCare Head of Education and Prevention Stella Dalton described the help her organisation provides to employers. This includes developing workplace gambling policies, providing tailored support for Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs), delivering bespoke training for HR and managers, including identifying problem gambling behaviour, and running education awareness programs for employees.

**Top:  
UCATT Learning  
Organiser Billy  
Butterworth**

**Right:  
Opus Mentis Director  
John Halligan**

**Below:  
GamCare Head of  
Education and  
Prevention Stella  
Dalton**



## Problematic gambling – the trade union role

**Problematic gambling has not been high on union, or indeed many other agendas, and most trade union reps only come across the issue when it is too late.**

UCATT Learning Organiser Billy Butterworth told the conference that union members may face disciplinary procedures and dismissal because their debts have become so large that they have stolen money from the employer, for example. Or they may have got into trouble because their gambling has resulted in absenteeism.

In industries like construction, a lack of concentration as a result of problematic gambling can not only result in poor productivity, but *"can be positively dangerous"* – a health and safety issue – he told the conference.

UCATT National Officer for Strategy, Education and Organisation Steve Craig says that the issue also has a learning and skills dimension. *"Our Union Learning Fund (ULF) project aims to deliver a wide range of learning, training and skills opportunities, with a particular focus on disadvantaged and 'hard-to-reach' learners in workplaces and in local communities. We see people with poor numeracy and literacy skills taking part in gambling without having a proper understanding of risk, probability, chance or the odds of winning – or losing."*

He added: *"We need to be raising awareness about the issue among our members and employers and progressing initiatives that include support for problematic gamblers in the same way that we negotiate drug and alcohol policies that incorporate access to counselling, support and treatment. But unions also have an important role in developing and promoting learning and skills opportunities in connection with this issue."*

Mental health consultancy Opus Mentis Director John Halligan advocated developing a workplace charter to help employers and unions develop policies on problematic gambling. Paul Buck says that unions have an important role in helping to spread good practice. And Graham England said that the 'legacy' model of AAA's pilot project, which included providing training for professionals who work with young people, could be used to develop workplace champions, including trade union reps.

The project included training people who work with young people to deliver awareness sessions and put problem gambling on the agenda. The training they received gave them the confidence to discuss the issue and identify problem gambling issues in the workplace. GamCare Business Development Manager Mike Kenward explained that an evaluation of the project found that in addition to increasing the knowledge and confidence of young people, it also increased the experience and confidence of the professional workforce.

**Left:  
Gamcare Business  
Development Manager  
Mike Kenward**

# What next?

## Feedback from conference

participants was extremely positive, with one suggesting that it should become an annual event. They found the opportunity to share knowledge, experiences and network invaluable. One commented that it was “extremely valuable for all agencies to work together in a joined-up approach” and several commented that Paul Buck’s real-life account of problematic gambling had been the highlight.

A number of gambling industry representatives said that they would be taking back information and messages from the event to use in staff training. In addition, communications union CWU Warrington Mail Centre branch women’s officer Karen Regan said that she would be raising the issue at her union’s regional committee.

*“We need to engage with problematic gambling with the same energy, commitment, support and awareness raising that we have given to drugs and alcohol,”* said UCATT National Officer for Strategy, Education and Organisation Steve Craig. *“This first conference has gone a long way to moving this problem up the agenda. Now we must make sure that we work together with other stakeholders to raise the issue with employers at the workplace and at national level. We also need to raise awareness among our members, raise literacy and numeracy skills levels, and make sure that people who have a problem know where to go to get help instead of getting the sack.”*

UCATT is looking to work with GamCare and other partners to develop initiatives, such as a workplace charter, in this area.

**Creative Experts started, reviewed and summarised the event in their own unique fashion.**



# Gambling facts and figures



**£13.6 billion**

Total gross gambling yield of the Great Britain (GB) gambling industry (April 2015 to March 2016)

**£9.2 billion**

UK gambling industry gross profits (2014/2015)



**104,896**

Total number of employees in the GB gambling industry (March 2016)

**8,709**

Total number of betting shops in GB (March 2016)



**33%**

Market share of the ‘remote’ or online betting, bingo and casino sector

**167,839**

Total number of gaming machines in GB



**590,000**

Estimated number of problematic gamblers in the UK

**450,000**

The number of children gambling in England and Wales every week

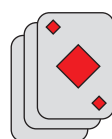


**1 in 8**

Number of frauds motivated by gambling

**5%**

Percentage of UK employers with a working gambling policy



Sources: Gambling Commission Industry Statistics; GambleAware; Beacon Counselling Trust

Where to find help and support with problematic gambling

### National Gambling Helpline:

Freephone 0808 8020133 [www.gamcare.org.uk](http://www.gamcare.org.uk)  
Advisers available 8am – Midnight, seven days a week

**GambleAware** [www.gambleaware.co.uk](http://www.gambleaware.co.uk)

**EPIC** [www.epicgc.com](http://www.epicgc.com)

**Addiction Recovery Agency**

[www.addictionrecovery.org.uk](http://www.addictionrecovery.org.uk)

**Big Deal?** The facts about gambling (aimed at young people) [www.bigdeal.org.uk](http://www.bigdeal.org.uk)

For more information about UCATT ULF Projects contact:

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