

WORD ON THE STREET

GAMBLING AND HOMELESSNESS



GambleAware Conference

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Dr Steve Sharman

HOMELESSNESS: DEFINING AND QUANTIFYING

- Rough sleeping
- Statutory Homelessness
- Hostels and hidden homelessness



WHY HOMELESSNESS AND GAMBLING?

- Study 1: Is gambling a problem for the homeless population?
- Study 2: Is gambling a cause or a consequence of homelessness?



STUDY THREE — FULL INTERVIEWS



- Full interviews to fully understand
- 20 people, 10 cities to remove London bias
- Also talk to service providers



THIS IS THE ONE

“The roulette machine, if I let it take me in the moment and if I’d won big, I’d keep on going, thinking I can maybe win even bigger”



THIS IS THE ONE

**“and there’s some mistaken
foolhardy believe that this time
I’m going to win, this time’s going
to be different”**



THIS IS THE ONE

“I was thinking, well I could turn that £100 into maybe £1,000 and then I gambled. If I lose, I lose. That is your way of thinking, you think you’re always going to win”



THIS IS THE ONE

“I have ended up with far more than I had in the first place, that it has worked out well, you know, you always convince yourself that it will be one of them nights”



SAFE ENVIRONMENT?

“But then when I got older and out of care and went homeless at the end I’d be in the bookies all the time, getting warm, so I thought bugger it, why not?”



SAFE ENVIRONMENT?

“...it was a good way of staying warm and you can use the toilets, plus they give you coffee as well. You know, the longer you stay there and as you’re gambling, they’ll hand you free coffee”



SAFE ENVIRONMENT?

“I used to always go to the bookies to use the toilets to inject”

“I use the toilet and shoot up in there and then sit out there and watch the TVs all day, instead of walking about in the cold”



CRIMINAL ACTS

“I’ve shoplifted, it’s usually meats or drink or – anything I could get actually. I’d just pick it up and walk right out the door with it”



CRIMINAL ACTS

“...if I gambled and then I had nothing, I would just go and steal a load of computer games... On a bad day I would steal about £300 worth of games and on a good day we’re talking close to a grand’s worth”



SUICIDE

“I have taken an overdose twice, I have thought of many ways to commit suicide... But, yeah, I have considered it many times”



SUICIDE

“I remember, I had an auntie, she was bi-polar and she was quite ill. But she had quite a bit of money, and I was like, well – and she wanted me to go and get her something at the shop, she gave me her card. And I took money out of the bank account and I gambled it. So, obviously she found out blah, blah, blah... it turned out two years later she took her own life, ended her life. So I was like, it’s all my fault, you know. So I tried to – not hang myself but I had like a jacket and two sort of straps and just tied it round my neck and just kept pulling and pulling”



RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING MEASURES - LEAFLETS

“I think they’re a waste of time, the leaflets in the bookies, because people are just going to see them and think, “Oh, I’ve not got a problem.” So I think the way they’re doing it is a useless waste of time, but the bookies are happy to do that because they know that people aren’t going to do that”



RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING MEASURES – SELF EXCLUSION

**..she used to say, “Why
don't you just exclude
yourself from here? You
should stop gambling.”
And it'd be like, what could
you say? She still took the
bet though.**



RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING MEASURES – POP UP MESSAGES

“Yeah, I just press continue and you get three seconds, they continue. They annoy me if anything”

“I just think, fuck off, I’ve got three seconds to wait ‘til I can spend again”



CONCLUSIONS

- Different points of intervention
- Support for Homeless services
- Appreciation of individual circumstance

