

REPORT TITLE	<i>2018 Annual Report of the Director of Public Health Harmful Gambling - The Other Side of the Coin</i>
REPORT OF	<i>Julie Webster, Acting Director for Health & Wellbeing</i>

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides the Health and Wellbeing Board with the annual report of the Director of Public Health. The purpose of the Public Health Annual Report is to draw attention to local issues of importance which have an impact on population health. Since the Council took back responsibility for Public Health in 2013 we have published five reports on the topics of social isolation, healthy schools and children, domestic violence and the roles of the Council and the NHS in promoting health and wellbeing. These reports have led to action in the reduction of the number of people smoking in the borough, to levels below the national average; increased support for people who were feeling socially isolated plus significant activity across a range of partners to highlight and reduce the damage caused to our communities from alcohol abuse e.g. Drink Less Enjoy More Campaign.

The 2018 annual report reflects on the public's concern about the impact of gambling on local people. It supports the delivery of the Wirral 2020 Plan and the Pledge 'Wirral Residents Live Healthier Lives'.

The annual report aims to describe what harmful gambling is and to illustrate the impact it has on local residents, their families and friends.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The report details a number of recommendations that have been developed in conjunction with local partners and key Council departments e.g. licensing and planning. The recommendations cover action on the following themes:

- Raising the profile of harmful gambling via a communications campaign to highlight the impact of harmful gambling; working with schools and promoting the help and support available to people who are struggling with their gambling habits
- Supporting people at risk of harmful gambling by raising the awareness of frontline staff of the support that is available
- Understanding and measuring harmful gambling in the borough to inform future licensing decisions
- Work with other Councils to identify action to reduce the risks that consumers, especially those that are vulnerable, face from gambling e.g. enhanced consumer protection for online gambling

In addition it is proposed that a working group is established with the Gambling Commission to consider how we can use local powers to support a reduction from harm relating to gambling.

The Health & Wellbeing Board is requested to support the recommendations outlined in the report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The 2018 Public Health Annual Report focuses on the public's concern about the impact of gambling in our population. The report calls for action to minimise the harm that results from addiction to gambling and particularly the impact on people who are already in financial difficulty. It supports the Wirral Plan 2020 pledge: Wirral Residents Live Healthier Lives.
- 1.2 The production of an annual report is a statutory requirement of the Director of Public Health. It is an important vehicle to identify key issues, flag up problems, report progress and inform local inter-agency action. The council has a duty to publish the report.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Gambling has been a part of society for thousands of years. For the majority of people it is a harmless and sociable activity, commonly practiced and accepted as part of everyday life. However, this leads us to normalise gambling behaviours to an extent that we don't recognise when it has become a problem.
- 2.2 Harmful gambling can lead to a wide variety of health and social issues, including debt, job loss, homelessness, drug and alcohol addiction and domestic abuse. Due to this complex mix of personal and social issues, harmful gambling cannot be addressed in isolation; action is needed across a variety of organisations and services.
- 2.3 With the increasing media interest in harmful gambling, and the recent announcement by the government on the introduction of a maximum stake for fixed odds betting terminals down from £100.00 to £2.00 this Public Health Annual Report is timely. But whilst this policy change with regard to fixed odds betting terminals is to be welcomed, there is still much to do to understand the radical shift to online gambling.
- 2.4 We need to do more to prevent harmful gambling from happening and also to provide support to those who already have a problem. This offer should also be extended to the friends and families of those affected.
- 2.5 We look forward to reflecting on this report in years to come and to see what changes have been achieved locally, how we have influenced wider conversations on this topic. We hope that this report helps to further our local understanding of the issue and reinforce the growing narrative that harmful gambling is a wide spread threat to the health and wellbeing of local people.

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