

Problem gambling and homelessness

Victoria Sharman QN

Community Clinical Nurse Lead

Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust

Problem Gambling and Homeless

Presented by Victoria Sharman

**Queen's Nurse and Community Clinical
Nurse Lead, Hertfordshire Partnership
University NHS Foundation Trust**

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Gambling

- 56.2% of UK adults (16+) gambled in 2016.
- If the lottery is removed, 41.7% of adults gambled in 2016.

(Gambling Commission, 2018).

These figures do not include people experiencing homelessness as the survey is sent to private postal addresses.

Problem Gambling

- **Definition:** gambling to a degree that compromises, disrupts or damages family, personal or recreational pursuits (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2014)
- The Gambling Commission (2018) reported around 0.7% of the population experience problems with gambling, around 430,000 people.

Who is most likely to be affected?

- Men
- Teenagers and young adults
- If someone else in the family has a problem with gambling, particularly a parent
- People who work in casinos, betting shops, amusement arcades or play sports for money
- Certain types of gambling: internet, fixed odds betting, video poker, dice games, high-risk stocks, roulette
- If person drinks excessive alcohol or uses illegal drugs
- People with mental health problems.

(Source: Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2014).

Gambling and Mental Health

- Problem gamblers have higher rates of depression, affective disorders, panic disorder and agoraphobia (Linden, et al.1986).
- Depression and attempted suicide rates are at least double the national average (NHS Choices, 2009).
- 50% of problem gamblers are also addicted to alcohol (NHS Choices, 2009).
- There is an association between history of trauma and problem gambling with 64% reporting emotional trauma, 41% physical trauma and 24% sexual trauma (Kausch et al. 2006).

Gambling and Physical Health

Problem gamblers often report experiencing:

- Migraine and tension headaches
- Intestinal disorders – irritable bowel and peptic ulcer
- Hypertension
- Insomnia
- Cardiovascular disease
- Impaired immune system
- Binge eating
- Higher smoking rates (Source: Fong, 2005).

Gambling and Physical Health

Problem Gamblers also experience physical withdrawal symptoms like those experienced by drug and alcohol addicts such as:

- Tremor
- Sweating
- Anxiety
- Nausea
- Diarrhoea
- Vomiting

(Wallis, 2006).

Gambling and Dopamine

- MRI scans have revealed that the neurotransmitter dopamine floods the nucleus accumbens in the midbrain resulting in over stimulated feelings of interest and excitement in the gambling addict (Potenza et al. 2003).
- Addicts therefore seek out gambling not for pleasure but for the dopamine rush which creates a vicious circle where the person focuses on gambling at the expense of everything else (Ross et al. 2008).

Problem Gambling Warning Signs

- Missing time from education or work
- Repeated failed attempts to stop or control gambling
- Borrowing money to gamble or pay debts
- Gambling to escape worries
- Neglecting the care of one's self or family in order to gamble
- Lying about gambling
- Gambling more money in an attempt to win back losses

Problem Gambling Warning Signs

- Selling or pawning personal possessions to get money to gamble
- Volatile mood swings
- Excessive anxiety or excitement around 'payday' (wages, benefits, etc).
- Lack of support network
- Unwillingness to talk about money or how money is spent.

(Sources: O'Hare, 2009 and Sharman et al. 2018).

Impact on Others

It is estimated that for every problem gambler, at least 15 other people are directly affected (Wallis, 2009).

Problem Gambling and Homelessness

- Gambling problems are more prevalent in the homeless population than the general population.
- 11.4% of the homeless population found to have problem gambling.
- 61.5% of participants with some level of gambling risk had problems before homelessness, 15.4% reported experiencing problems after homelessness.

(Sharman, et al. 2016).

Problem Gambling and Homelessness

Reasons for gambling:

- An escape from their difficulties
- Viewed as a source of income, escape poverty
- An opportunity to change your life in one day, or with one bet
- To alleviate boredom
- Warmth, shelter, toilets and a free hot drink
- Pick up the habit through exposure

(Sharman and D'Ardenne, 2018).

Diagnosis

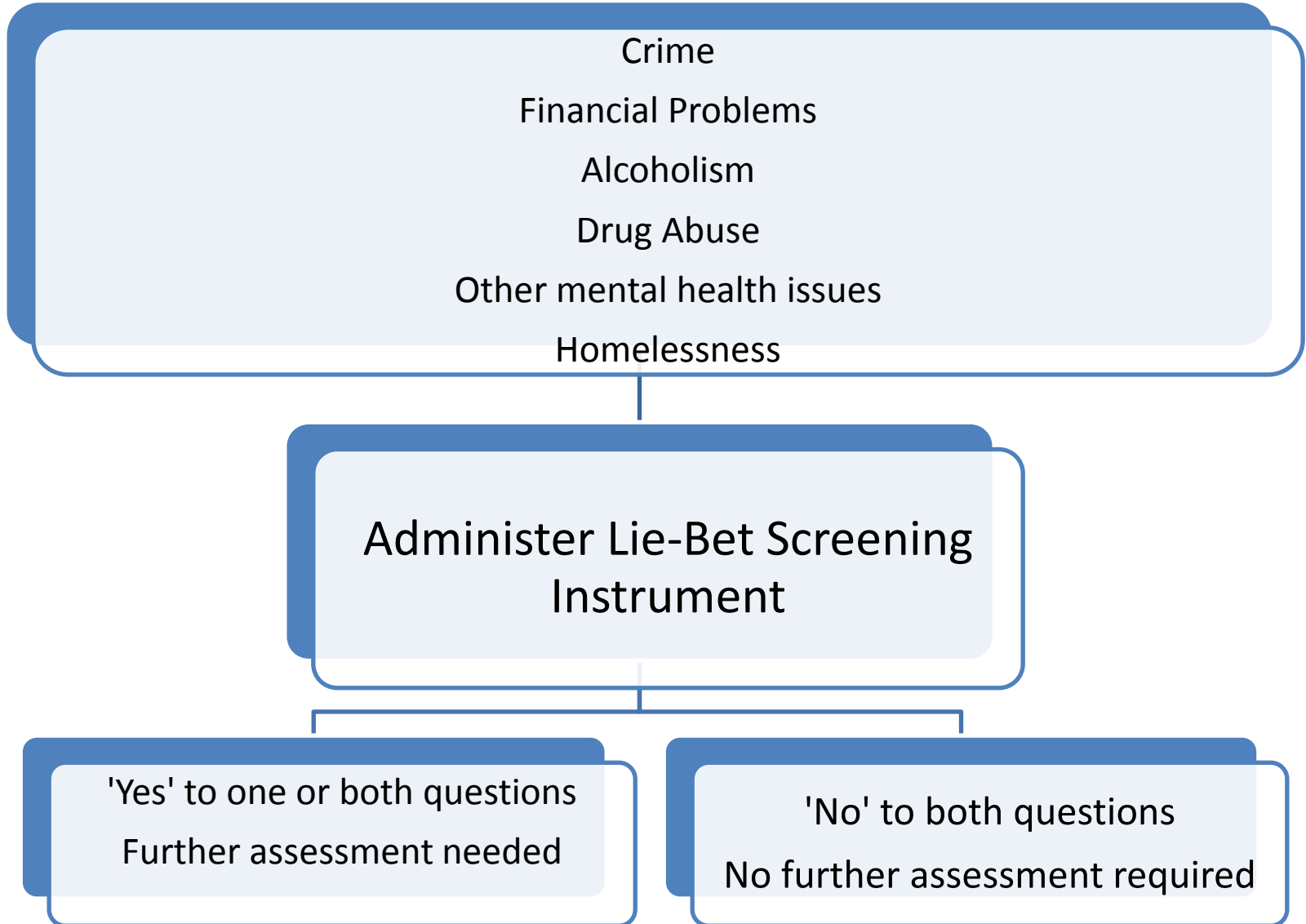
- **Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)**
- **South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS)** is a lifetime measure of problem gambling that has been found to be reliable and valid.
- **NORC DSM Screen for Gambling Problems (NODS)** is based on the DSM-4 criteria for Pathological Gambling and assesses for both lifetime and past-year problem gambling.
- **Gamblers Anonymous (GA) Twenty Question** are provided to help the individual decide if they are a compulsive gambler.
- **The Lincoln Homelessness and Gambling Scale (L-HAGS)** is currently being piloted.

Problem Gambling Detection

The Lie-Bet questionnaire

1. Have you ever had to **lie** to people important to you about how much you gambled?
2. Have you ever felt the need to **bet** more and more money?

Lie-Bet Questionnaire Process



Treatment

- CBT
- Motivational interviewing
- There are no medications licensed for approved use to treat pathological gambling.
- Naltrexone – is being used as a pilot within the National Problem Gambling Clinic.

Support

- Gambler's Anonymous – provide the 12 step programme and Gamanon provide support to family of problem gamblers.
- NHS – local mental health teams and National Problem Gambling Clinic.
- National Gambling Helpline provided by Gamcare.
- The Gordon Moody Association – a charity which provides treatment and housing for problem gamblers.
- Private health care providers – The Priory, The Nightingale Hospital and Addiction Lounge.

What Can We Do?

- Consider problem gambling when assessing people experiencing homelessness.
- Use the lie-bet questionnaire.
- Refer people for further assessment and support.

Thank You

Any Questions?

Victoria.sharman@nhs.net

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