?Cheshire Problem Gambling Screening Pilot Wins Community Award

Thursday 9 November, 2017

A problem gambling screening pilot in Cheshire has won a Howard League for Penal Reform National Community Award in the Policing and Adults category. The awards celebrate initiatives that work to promote lasting solutions to crime and make communities safer.

Beacon Counselling Trust, in partnership with national problem gambling support charity GamCare, working with Mitie Care and Custody and Cheshire Constabulary, trained over 250 staff in three custody suites across Cheshire to raise awareness and to screen for problem gambling at the point of arrest and to refer into local support and treatment services. 13% of the 760 arrestees screened during the pilot provided a positive response, which is around 13 times higher than levels of problem gambling in the population of Great Britain as a whole.

Mike Kenward, Development Director at GamCare, says: *"When a person is arrested and processed via a custody suite they will be routinely screened for drug and alcohol issues, however there is currently no standard screening for those presenting with problem gambling issues. We know from international evidence that there is likely to be a high percentage of people within the criminal justice system who are at-risk or struggling with problem gambling, and it is vital to address this."*

Neil Platt, Clinical Director at Beacon Counselling Trust, says: *"This diversion pathway provides a unique opportunity to offer a restorative sanction for the offender – a chance to educate, counsel and rehabilitate in order to reduce the cycle of reoffending."*

The Gambling Commission estimates that there are approximately 430,000 problem gamblers in Great Britain, and around 2 million more people who are at-risk of developing problems with gambling. Around 1% of the people reaching out for support through the National Gambling HelpLine, operated by GamCare, mention that they have resorted to criminal activity to fund their gambling.

As well as continuing their work in prisons and with probation services, GamCare is now seeking to expand screening pilots into other areas of Great Britain and would like to connect with other organisations looking to collaborate. Email info@gamcare.org.uk to find out more.

For more information about GamCare services visit www.gamcare.org.uk

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For more information or accompanying images please contact Catherine Sweet, Marketing and Communications Manager, at catherine.sweet@gamcare.org.uk or on 020 7801 7000.

GamCare – Working to minimise gambling-related harm

- GamCare is the leading national provider of information, advice, support and free counselling for the prevention and treatment of problem gambling. Our expert services are confidential and non-judgemental.
- GamCare operates the National Gambling HelpLine on Freephone **0808 8020 133** or via web chat at www.gamcare.org.uk. Advisers are available 8am – Midnight, seven days a week. Moderated chatrooms are also open daily, and peer-to-peer support is available through the GamCare Forum.
- For more information on GamCare counselling services, visit www.gamcare.org.uk/free-counselling

Beacon Counselling Trust

Beacon Counselling Trust is a Liverpool based counselling charity which employs fully qualified counsellors who have extensive experience working with a wide range of personal and work-related problems. For more information see http://beaconcounsellingtrust.co.uk/

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