GamCare Lockdown Report Finds Fewer Gamblers Seeking Support – Charity Encourages Anyone Affected to Reach Out Now

Wednesday 21 October, 2020

- *National lockdown initially saw fewer calls to National Gambling Helpline as people faced privacy issues and other anxieties caused by COVID*
- *Although overall gambling participation has fallen during the pandemic, the most engaged gamblers have increased either time or money spent gambling and used new online gambling products*
- *GamCare has significantly increased online and telephone access to support, including group chatrooms, to ensure consistent help for gamblers and their loved ones during the pandemic*

GamCare, the largest provider of support and treatment for gambling related harms across Great Britain, has today provided a report on its services during lockdown, which highlights how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted people experiencing gambling harms.

The National Gambling Helpline, operated by GamCare, is available 24 hours a day over the phone or via one-to-one live chat. GamCare also offer a range of support and treatment services as part of the National Gambling Treatment Service, funded by GambleAware.

Their new ***National Gambling Helpline During Lockdown*** report shows that despite lockdown exacerbating existing anxieties surrounding finances and isolation amongst gamblers, their ability to seek help was limited as they struggled for privacy.

Concerns over privacy also drove a switch to more live chats than phone calls, as this channel can offer more discretion if families or housemates are in close proximity – many people contacting the Helpline have not yet spoken to their loved ones about what they are going through and want to know how to broach the subject.

Other trends from the Helpline and GamCare's frontline services between March – August 2020 included:

- Engagement with online group chatrooms increased. Anxieties about COVID were key themes of online conversations, alongside gambling-related issues.
- Staff on the Helpline flagged increased concern around domestic abuse being experienced by callers.
- At the start of lockdown there was a significant minority of calls asking for self-exclusion via GAMSTOP (an online self-exclusion tool) to be lifted – highlighting that callers were seeking to gamble again despite previously removing the temptation. This trend has since abated.

The report also mentions that, although existing engagement with GamCare treatment services remained high, the number of people beginning treatment during this period was lower than the previous year.

Research from the Gambling Commission[1], published alongside the report, shows the although overall gambling participation has dropped nationally, 18-34 year olds and the most 'engaged gamblers' (i.e. those participating in three or more gambling activities per month), have both reported increased time or money spent on gambling, plus using online gambling products they had not tried before. A subsequent YouGov study commissioned by GambleAware[2] showed that approximately half (52%) of those saying they gambled more cited 'relieving boredom or for something to do' as a reason for doing so.

Anna Hemmings, Chief Executive of GamCare, says:

"There is no doubt that the pandemic has impacted people's help seeking, particularly in the initial phase of the pandemic when our daily lives were immeasurably changed. Our service users are speaking to us about increasing anxiety, isolation and money worries.

As we now look at further lockdowns across various areas, we need to be aware of the impact and risks for gamblers experiencing harm. We need to be more vocal about encouraging people to seek help despite the external pressures, and to remind people that we're here to help as we did in the summer

Media:

Related Sectors:

Charities & non-profits :: Coronavirus (COVID-19) ::

Related Keywords:

Gambling :: Problem Gambling :: Gambling Harms :: COVID-19 :: Coronavirus :: National Gambling Helpline :: Gambling Support :: Report :: Isolation :: Domestic Abuse ::

Scan Me:

with our #ReadyToTalk campaign.

There is no doubt that gamblers and their loved ones will continue to need support, perhaps increasingly so. GamCare is doing all it can to be flexible and tailor its services to meet those complex and changing needs during the pandemic and beyond. From the very first contact you have with us, we can make a difference – if you're worried about your gambling or anyone else's, talk to us now."

GamCare has worked extensively to overcome the issues presented by lockdown, to ensure those struggling with gambling related harms can continue to access specialist treatment and support over the phone or online as part of the full range of services offered across the National Gambling Treatment Service (NGTS), and if people have complex needs, we can refer them to other NGTS providers.

Support is available 24 hours a day via the National Gambling Helpline (Freephone 0808 80 20 133 or web chat via www.GamCare.org.uk), as well as through GamCare's online Forum where users can connect with others in similar situations.

GamCare's daily group chatrooms offered extended hours, and structured treatment services are available over the phone and online despite face-to-face services being suspended for the time being.

GamCare also offer an online CBT course, *GameChange*, which offers users concerned about their gambling the chance to work through eight tailored modules with regular support from a GamCare therapist.

GamCare's *National Gambling Helpline During Lockdown* report is based on quantitative and qualitative research from calls to the National Gambling Helpline between March – August 2020. The full report can be found at gamcare.org.uk/about-us/annual-review-and-statistics/

Media Enquiries

For more information contact:

Catherine Sweet, GamCare Head of Marketing and Communications:

catherine.sweet@gamcare.org.uk
/ +44 (0)207 801 7028

Woolf Thomson Jones, UK Communications Support

woolf@montfort.london / +44 (0)737 639 2693

Notes to Editors

GamCare – Working to minimise gambling-related harm

- GamCare operates the National Gambling Helpline on Freephone 0808 8020 133 or via web chat at www.gamcare.org.uk, providing information, advice and support for anyone affected by problem gambling, funded by GambleAware. Advisers are available 24/7, every day of the year.
- GamCare provides a range of free treatment and support services to anyone affected by gambling harms across England, Scotland, Wales, as well as a moderated online Forum and daily chatrooms so that people can speak to others experiencing similar issues and seek support. Find out more at www.gamcare.org.uk
- GamCare is part of the National Gambling Treatment Service, funded by GambleAware.
- In June 2020, GamCare launched a joint campaign with Samaritans, Refuge and Cruse Bereavement Care with the hashtag #ReadyToTalk. Over the course of the campaign, we reached over 300,000 people via social media engagement, and a further 1 million people via media and stakeholder engagement. Campaign content was shared by MPs and several other prominent public figures, as well as through the Helplines Partnership and other supporters. We perceive that the campaign has had an impact on phone calls to the Helpline over the last few months, although there may also be additional factors which need to be considered.

1.

2. https://about.gambleaware.org/media/2284/yougov-covid-19-report.pdf

One in five (20%) 'problem gamblers' (defined as those with a Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) score of 8+) reported that they gambled more during the initial months of lockdown. Approximately half (52%) of those saying they gambled more cited 'relieving boredom or for something to do' as a reason for doing so.

Company Contact:

GamCare

T. 02078017000
E. press@gamcare.org.uk
W. https://www.gamcare.org.uk

View Online

Additional Assets:
https://www.gamcare.org.uk/about-us/annual-review-and-statistics/

Newsroom: Visit our Newsroom for all the latest stories:
https://www.gamcare.pressat.co.uk