

Consultation Response from Beacon Counselling Trust:

Thank you for asking Beacon Counselling Trust to comment on the Cheshire East revised Gambling Statement of Licensing Principles. We were pleased to see recognition of the work we have done with Cheshire Constabulary. This work has developed, and we continue to work with Public Health and the Criminal Justice System across the NW to promote awareness of gambling related harm (GRH) and this work informs our comments below:

The figures used in the Principles Statement state that the main vulnerable group in Cheshire East is young white males on low incomes. This information should be informed by an Area Risk Assessment that looks at the key factors that increase the risk of GRH. Deprivation is without doubt a key factor but recent surveys by the Gambling Commission and research (for example by Liverpool John Mores University and Swansea University) have indicated that gambling related harm is more prevalent than previously thought and there are some particularly vulnerable groups that need to be considered. For example : Armed Forces Veterans are 10 times more likely to suffer GRH and those with neurodiverse conditions are also at significantly increased risk. Young people and those living on their own are also at increased risk as well as those with co-morbidities such as drug and alcohol addiction. It would be good to see recognition of this in the principles document and identification of the high-risk areas in which people need to be upskilled in their awareness of GRH.

The lack of awareness in society and in many public and private employers means that it is important that advertising and location of gambling activity is controlled so that vulnerable groups (especially young people) are not impacted as the Principles correctly state. . We believe this should be accompanied by a requirement for licenced facilities to promote awareness of the risk of GRH and of local services that can support and help those impacted by their gambling or by that of a significant other. Between 6-10 people are impacted by an individual's harmful gambling.

Beacon Counselling Trust (BCT) has reached more than 20,000 individuals in the past year through its community outreach and support programmes leading to over 8,000 people accessing treatment and support for gambling-related harms. Through a combination of community outreach, education, and therapeutic intervention, this extensive engagement led to 8,174 individuals taking the crucial step of accessing free timely support. Beacon Counselling Trust has seen a steep rise in self-referrals, and this is part in due to the presence of awareness raising with professionals and BCT outreach teams in the wider community with presence in community centres to GP surgeries, attending health events,

engaging with other third-sector organisations and developing referral pathways with other health services and local authorities. BCT's flagship Bet You Can Help training programme (which is delivered free) has also empowered hundreds of professionals and community members across healthcare, education, criminal justice and armed forces sectors to identify and respond to gambling harms. By breaking down stigma and making help more accessible, Beacon's work is transforming how communities respond to gambling harms - one conversation at a time. The figure of people impacted in Cheshire East could be 60-70,000, possible higher if affected others are taken into account. The Area Risk Assessment would identify where this help might best be targeted.

The requirements for notices/signage should include information on how and where to get advice, treatment and support and be prominently and clearly displayed. In many cases the industry has made such information hard to access for example by putting advice/warnings in small print or in places where it is less likely to be noticed. The policies and procedures required should also indicate what training and awareness raising applicants should make sure are in place to ensure staff are able to identify and signpost those at risk or in need of help.

We welcome working further with Cheshire East to provide prevention, education and early intervention and offer treatment service that currently have no waiting list. Our training programme is free and our treatment and support also.

Thank you once again for asking us to comment.