

## Conclusions

This pilot has sought to test the hypothesis that problem gambling levels in arrestee cohorts in a sample from the UK Criminal Justice System mirror those identified in international evidence at between 17 and 32%.

Key findings of the research include:

- 13% of all arrestees surveyed were at some risk of a gambling problem according to the Lie Bet screening tool
- CJS personnel lack awareness of problem gambling issues and offending populations are inadequately screened for problem gambling. This means offenders who experience gambling issues are unlikely to have their problem gambling identified at an early stage, if at all.
- Correspondingly low levels of referral to problem gambling treatment services by criminal justice personnel.

In the light of these findings, we make some clear recommendations to improve awareness of problem gambling issues in the criminal justice system, in the context of offending behaviour, as well as encouraging improvements to current screening, recording treatment practices for problem gamblers across the justice system.

Next step... validate this unique piece of work with a larger and broader CJ footprint.

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## Recommendations

The findings of this pilot indicate high numbers of offenders processed by police in Cheshire who have screened positively against the Lie-Bet screening tool.

The ability to provide appropriately tailored problem gambling treatment services to individuals within the criminal justice context is critically dependent upon effective processes for identifying and classifying problem gamblers. At present, offenders across the criminal justice system are not systematically screened, assessed or treated for gambling problems. Consequently, many offenders who might benefit from problem gambling specific treatment programs are not referred to appropriate treatment at any point in their contact with the justice system, thus the establishment of a uniform process for awareness raising and screening for problem gambling across the criminal justice system is a primary recommendation that should be considered for funding by the appropriate commissioning platform.

### Summary of key recommendations

Key recommendations stemming from this research project, which are practical and can be implemented in the short-term, will involve all treatments and support stakeholders working closely with key criminal justice stakeholders to:

- Increase criminal justice staff understanding of problem gambling and awareness of problem gambling and awareness of treatment and support services;
- Introduce systematic problem gambling screening, assessment and service referral processes across the criminal justice system;
- Improve offenders access to targeted interventions according to their level of criminal justice contact and treatment need.

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**"We can estimate that problem gamblers are 4.4 times more likely to be in prison than the average member of the population. Costing between £40 and £190 million per year."** IPPR Cards on the Table - Nov.2016

## Arresting Problem Gambling in the UK Criminal Justice System

RAISING AWARENESS AND SCREENING FOR PROBLEM GAMBLING AT THE POINT OF ARREST

Whilst there is little hard evidence in the UK to support levels of problem gambling in the arrestee population, international evidence indicates that on a random sample of nearly 1500 detainees, a spread of between 17 to 32% were problem gamblers according to the lie/ bet screening tool. (Johnson et al ,1988).

In order to test the hypothesis that the same level of prevalence exists in the UK Criminal Justice System (CJS), a pilot exercise using the Lie/Bet screening tool has screened for problematic gambling at the point of arrest within three Cheshire custody suites for the first time.

The study (Use of a Short Gambling Screen with and Arrestee Population: A Feasibility Study; Cuadrado & Lieberman, 2012) overall found there was a need for gambling screening at the point of arrest.



# Arresting Problem Gambling in the UK Criminal Justice System

## Raising Awareness and Screening for Problem Gambling at the Point of Arrest

Beacon Counselling Trust in partnership with GamCare, Cheshire Constabulary and Mitie Care in Custody sought to test the hypothesis within the UK CJS by raising the profile of problem gambling amongst key employees, and introducing a simple gambling screen to identify problematic gambling at the point of arrest.

The programme delivered training to staff in three police custody suites, helping them to understand the implications of problem gambling behaviour, recognise

the signs and symptoms of a problem, and screen for gambling issues amongst arrestees. Staff were upskilled to sensitively probe the issue, referring the individual to additional support and local treatment provision where issues were identified. Where detainees are referred into the National Problem Gambling Treatment Network, they received a full assessment and were invited to engage with the national treatment pathway depending on the outcome of assessment.

## General Background

Approximately 1.5 – 2 million individuals enter the CJS through magistrate's courts each year within the UK ([openjustice.gov.uk](http://openjustice.gov.uk) 2015) A significant number of these individuals will have previously been arrested and will have

been processed via one of the multiple custody suites in the UK. A custody suite is a designated area within a regional police station, designed and adapted to process those who have been arrested and are entering into the criminal justice pathway.

## Project Description

### PURPOSE

The overall purpose of this pilot was to reduce the development of gambling problems and their harmful impacts in individuals in the Criminal Justice System in Cheshire.

### AIMS

1. To raise the profile of problem gambling in the CJS in Cheshire.
2. To screen for and identify potential at-risk and problem gamblers at the point of arrest.
3. To signpost identified individuals to advice, support and treatment.
4. To deliver interventions appropriate to individuals' needs.

### OBJECTIVES

The objectives are:

1. To design and deliver an awareness raising training programme for key staff working in police custody suites and the wider CJS so as to effect culture change.
2. To introduce the Lie/Bet problem gambling screen into initial arrest screening.
  - a. To train custody suite staff to deliver the Lie/Bet screening tool.
3. To signpost identified individuals to advice, support and treatment.
  - a. To signpost all those who identify as at risk of a gambling problem into the national problem gambling treatment network.
4. To deliver interventions appropriate to individuals' needs.

## Key Outcomes from the Pilot

- Over 250 individuals from a variety of organisations involved with the wider Criminal Justice System in Cheshire were upskilled in awareness in problem gambling in Criminal Justice System and trained to use the lie/bet screening tool.
- This included police custody suite staff, medical and nursing staff, and prison officers from several prisons in the county.
- 760 individual screenings took place.
- 99 positive results were recorded against one or more of the questions
- 29 elected to receive an intervention from NPGTS

*Chelmsford medicine company had over £50,000 stolen by gambling addict employee*

## Key Findings from the Pilot

- The pilot yielded significant additional insight about screening, identifying and recording problem gambling across the criminal justice system
- The relationship between problem gambling and crime and the overall magnitude of the problem.

In summary, the pilot identified problem gambling levels in the arrestee population in Cheshire at 13%. Although not as high a proportion as that identified by Cuadrado and Liebermann, this is around 13 times higher than problem gambling levels across the general population (Gambling Commission/health survey England 2015)

The pilot also identified a lack of awareness across the criminal justice system of problem gambling as an issue of significance, along with little or inadequate screening for problem gamblers across offending populations.

This has led to correspondingly extremely low referrals to problem gambling treatment services by criminal justice personnel despite the comparatively high numbers identified.

*Gambling addict jailed for stealing more than £200,000 from sick mother*

