

Institution: University of East London (UEL)		
Unit of Assessment: 4 Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience		
Title of case study: Making bets in a burning house; Minimising gambling-related harm in vulnerable populations		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2012 – 2020 (ongoing)		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Dr Steven Sharman Professor John Turner	Research Fellow Professor of Psychology	2017 – present 1994 – present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014 – 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

Around 650,000 people in the UK suffer from compulsive gambling behaviours. Research from UEL has transformed our understanding of why some people are especially vulnerable to gambling addiction, and informed UK government's landmark 2019 decision to reduce Fixed Odds Betting Terminals stakes from £100 to £2. This research has contributed to multiple reports from Public Health England and policymakers, and directly educated local councils, charities and gamblers themselves. In particular, it has improved treatment and support services for problematic gamblers throughout the UK.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

The repercussions of gambling as a behavioural addiction can include mental health problems, financial crises, relationship breakdown, domestic violence and self-harm or suicide. Research conducted by the Drugs and Addictive Behaviours Research Group (DABRG) at UEL has played a key role in understanding gambling as an addictive behaviour, by raising awareness of how and why some individuals are more vulnerable to the adverse effects of gambling addiction than others.

The research began in 2012 in a collaboration with the sole UK residential treatment provider for individuals with gambling problems, the *Gordon Moody Association* (GMA). This led to a research project examining GMA client data from 2000 to 2015, which provided a novel integrated analysis of specialist residential treatment for gamblers. The study identified that a shift in recent years towards the use of online gambling and Fixed Odds Betting Terminals (FOBTS) amongst men seeking help for gambling addiction (**R1**). The client data showed increases over time in the number of gamblers attempting suicide, along with increases in the number of clients reporting anxiety and mental health disorders (**R2**). The research revealed that clients who started gambling early in life were more likely to show more severe problematic gambling in adulthood, along with increased illicit substance use and other criminal behaviour.

The research provided the largest analysis to date in the UK that examines the links between gambling and violence, by surveying 3025 young UK adult males with gambling addiction (**R3**). The study demonstrated strong links between problematic gambling and violent behaviours; significantly, it showed that these links also extended to non-problem gambling.

Other research from the group has further examined how and why vulnerable populations are susceptible to gambling related harm, by focusing on homeless populations. The 2017 study

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indicated that the prevalence of disordered gambling is 11.6% amongst the homeless population as opposed to 0.7% in the general population (R4). It showed that gambling is a common risk factor contributing to homelessness. Nevertheless, the research found that gambling disorders were often overlooked by homeless services and that support services are often inadequate. A 2019 study examined how GPs can better identify gambling disorders among their patients, who are often reluctant to disclose when gambling has become problematic (R5). The study identified problems that GPs experience in referring affected patients to appropriate services.

The group's work continues to investigate vulnerable populations and gambling. In 2019 the first ever systematic study (R6) of exposure to gambling and alcohol advertising in English football matchday programmes identified children as a vulnerable population, being targeted by gambling advertising. It showed that gambling marketing was present in 59% of children's specific programme sections.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- R1.** Sharman, S., Murphy, R., Turner, J. and Roberts, A. 2018. Trends and patterns in UK treatment seeking gamblers: 2000-2015. *Addictive Behaviors* 89, 51-56. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2018.09.009>
- R2.** Sharman, S., Murphy, R., Turner, J. and Roberts, A. 2019. Psychosocial correlates in treatment seeking gamblers: Differences in early age onset gamblers vs later age onset gamblers. *Addictive Behaviors* 97, 20-26. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2019.05.013>
- R3.** Roberts, A., Coid, J., King, R., Murphy, R., Turner, J., Bowden-Jones, H., Palmer Du Preez, K. and Landon, J. 2016. Gambling and violence in a nationally representative sample of UK men. *Addiction* 111(12), 2196-2207. <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.13522>
- R4.** Sharman, S. 2019. Gambling and homelessness: prevalence and pathways. *Current Addiction Reports* 6 (2), 57-64. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40429-019-00242-6>
- R5.** Roberts, A., Bowden-Jones, H., Roberts, D., and Sharman, S. 2019. Should GPs routinely screen for gambling disorders? *British Journal of General Practice* 69, 226-227. <https://doi.org/10.3399/bjgp19X702329>
- R6.** Sharman, S., Ferreira, C. A. and Newall, P. W. S. 2019. Exposure to gambling and alcohol marketing in soccer matchday programmes. *Journal of Gambling Studies* 36, 979-988. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10899-019-09912-6>

G1. Stephen Sharman, 'Exploring within-game constructs in gambling behaviour using virtual reality', Society for the Study of Addiction, 1 November 2017-31 March 2022, GBP167,148.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Informing direct changes in UK public policy on gambling

The Drugs and Addictive Behaviours Research Group's (DABRG) research on residential treatment for problem gamblers featured prominently in an *All-Party Parliamentary Group* report on Fixed Odds Betting Terminals and was included in the subsequent report in January 2017 (S1) which concluded that Fixed Odds Betting Terminals (FOBTs) transgressed the core harm prevention principles of the Gambling Act 2005. Following 2018 seminar, policy makers and members of the group submitted a report to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) detailing their findings (S2). Consequently, the DCMS instigated a widely publicised policy change to reduce the maximum stake size for Fixed Odds Betting Terminals, which were labelled (S1) as the 'crack cocaine' of gambling. The decision was hailed by the then Culture Secretary, Jeremy Wright, as a "significant step forward in protecting vulnerable people."

In addition, the group has contributed to a report based on their research into the links between suicide and gambling for the legal team who are preparing a bill which will allow coroners to collect data on those who die by suicide and who are affected by gambling-related harm (S3).

Policy debate stimulated by research

The group contributed expert advice to a private inquiry session by the *All-Party Parliamentary Group on Gambling Related Harm* on the 8 May 2019 into the damage caused by online gambling (**S4**). The subsequent report reflects key recommendations made by Sharman that the treatment of gambling addiction should be part of the NHS remit. The group's research featured heavily in the House of Lords Select Committee report on gambling harm released in July 2020. With DABRG being the only UK research group providing evidence on gambling in football match day programmes, their findings underpinned the report's recommendations on ending gambling advertising in football programming. The changes put forward by these reports have far-reaching implications for the gambling sector. They have been credited with directly informing government policy and leading to new plans for an overhaul of gambling legislation (**S5**).

Informing and changing clinical practice at Gordon Moody Association

The close partnership with the gambling treatment providers *Gordon Moody Associates* has been recognised in public fora such as the *GMA* annual trustees' meetings at the House of Commons, in their annual reports and on their own social media. For example, full presentations of data from **R2**, **R3** and **R5** from a *GMA* and stakeholders meeting in January 2018 at UEL are on their public website (**S6**). The findings of the research have improved how *GMA* delivers their support system by tailoring their review process in their implementation plan. This has included using Sharman's finding to identify key risks to retention of patients helping them to reduce the numbers who do not complete treatment. As a result, the research supports over 100 people in residential treatment and counselling programmes annually. (**S7**)

Informing health professionals, the gambling industry and the wider public about gambling related harm among vulnerable populations

Beyond their direct influence on policymakers' discussion and debate, key findings from the studies have informed and enhanced broader public engagement with these issues, and contributed to a change in public perception of problematic gambling as a public health concern.

The link between gambling and violence (**R1**) received extensive coverage in UK national newspapers such as *The Times* (**S8**) and significant international science and industry online news providers. Sharman contributed to a BBC Panorama documentary exploring gambling, which averaged over 3 million viewers in the UK, both as an advisor to the programme makers and as an expert participant in the documentary itself (**S9**). This contributed to changes in public perception about gambling, and to increased awareness of the dangers of problematic gambling behaviours amongst friends and family.

The group's recent research on gambling advertising has also raised awareness of how children are particularly vulnerable to detrimental effects of gambling addiction and are being targeted in football match day programmes. The results garnered widespread media attention, with the findings on children's exposure to football gambling adding to the controversy over the bet365 and FA Cup streaming deal in January 2020 (**S10**). The media attention led to the Betting Council announcing that the deal would be dropped.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

S1. All-Party Parliamentary Group Inquiry Report on Fixed Odds Betting

Terminals: <http://www.grh-appg.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/FINAL-FOBT-APPG-REPORT.pdf> with Sharman's report on the *Gordon Moody Association* work (**R2**, **R3**, **R5**) on page 49.

S2. Press release on GOV.UK entitled 'Government to cut Fixed Odds Betting Terminals maximum stake from £100 to £2, links to the DCMS consultation outcome: 'Consultation on proposals for changes to Gaming Machines and Social Responsibility

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Measures': <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-proposals-for-changes-to-gaming-machines-and-social-responsibility-measures> with the report labelled 'University of East London' (*Gordon Moody Association* summary document by Sharman, Turner and Roberts, covering **R2, R3, R5**) under the section 'Feedback received' also directly accessible here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/772217/drive-download-20180526T154741Z-001_1_.zip

S3. <https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/PDF/Report-3-Gambling-related-suicide-and-suicidal-behaviours.pdf>

S4. *All-Party Parliamentary Group on Gambling Related Harm*, 16 June 2020, UEL research cited on page 71. <http://www.grh-appg.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Online-report-Final-June16-2020.pdf>

S5. *House of Lords Select Committee on the Social and Economic Impact of the Gambling Industry* report, 2 July 2020, UEL research cited on pages 127 and 184. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5801/ldselect/ldgamb/79/7902.htm>

S6. *Gordon Moody Association* website page with links to all the UEL research presentations: <https://www.gordonmoody.org.uk/news/initial-research-findings-presentations-from-uel-event-in-january-2018>

S7. Testimonial from Adele Duncan, former CEO of the *Gordon Moody Association*, Jan 2020.

S8a. *The Times*, 7 September 2016. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/gamblers-more-likely-to-carry-out-violent-attacks-zbnlps6ks>

S8b. *Science Daily*, 6 September 2016. <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/09/160906103311.htm>

S8b. *PsychCentral*, 8 August 2018. <https://psychcentral.com/news/2016/09/07/violent-behavior-tied-to-gambling/109529.html>

S8c. *Casino.org*, 7 September 2016. <https://www.casino.org/news/male-problem-gamblers-more-prone-to-violence-says-new-uk-study>

S9. *BBC Panorama*. <https://bbcnews.co.uk/retail/2019/08/12/bbc-panorama-reports-rise-in-complaints-to-uk-bookmakers/>

S10. *i* article linking the findings from UEL to the bet365 /Sky deal controversy. <https://inews.co.uk/sport/football/football-programmes-betting-adverts-children-research-premier-league-championship-1359352>