



**EPIC**  
RESTART  
FOUNDATION



**Supporting women recovering from  
gambling harms – Needs Analysis**

## The EPIC Restart Foundation

The EPIC Restart Foundation is a UK registered charity providing practical support to help those recovering from gambling harm to positively restart their lives.

Our innovative and transformational programmes help people to overcome the isolation experienced in recovery after addiction - restoring confidence, resilience, and self-belief. We give people the tools to develop coping strategies, a sense of purposeful direction and the skills they need to rebuild family relationships, improve their employability, and move on with their lives after gambling harm.

Our 2021 pilot programme received powerful feedback but very few women took part. We wanted to understand the reasons for this, and to increase the inclusion, appeal, and impact of our activities so we can support more people, including women, in the future.

We wanted to hear directly from the women who have suffered gambling harm to truly understand what they feel would best support them in their recovery. So, we conducted an online Needs Analysis survey in February 2022 with a group of women known to have suffered gambling harm. This report sets out the results of that survey and outlines key factors to take into consideration when designing and delivering activities to support women recovering from gambling harm.

“ I would like to see  
**more support** aimed at females  
most of the support in my area is  
**male orientated** ”

### About the Author

*My name is Stacey Goodwin and for the first 8 years of my adult life, I was addicted to gambling. As a young woman, I felt completely alone and isolated. I believed for a long time that I was the only woman to go through this. This feeling of isolation, shame and fear of judgement prevented me for years from getting the help I so desperately needed.*

*8 years after my addiction began, I found a woman-only rehabilitation programme at Gordon Moody which changed my life. I was able to stop gambling for the first time. But whilst this was everything to me, I still struggled with the longer-term effects of gambling harm. I had taught myself, from being just 18, to isolate myself; to close conversations quickly; to cope with any situation life may throw at me with a bet.*

*It was through taking part in the **EPIC Restart Foundation programme**, that I was finally able to deal with some of the longer-term effects of gambling harm.*

*I recently shared my story through social media platforms, and I am still shocked every day by the amount of people, especially women, who reach out to me to share that they too are suffering gambling harm. I help as many people as I can but every conversation I have, the same message remains... **'Speaking to another woman, who truly understands, has helped me so much.'***

*I am now working with the EPIC Restart Foundation and others to create programmes which specifically respond to the needs of women and helps them to rebuild their lives after gambling harm.*

## The Survey

The survey was shared over the social media platform META (Facebook) within a group of people who have directly experienced gambling harm.

The survey consisted of 15 questions which examined:

- Participants' personal circumstance including caring responsibilities
- Any support previously received
- Barriers faced when looking for support
- Significant factors in their recovery
- Preferred ways to access support – online, in person etc.
- Flexibility for travel or time away from home

The survey was tested on a small group of 10 women initially to gain feedback before being shared with the whole group. It included multiple choice questions and open free text for respondents to expand or make any further comments. For example:

“

*Speaking to someone face to face would make a difference. Online for when feeling anxious is important as well*

”

“

*Because of my anxiety I feel 1 night would be OK, I just want to tell the world how much better I feel today than 3 months ago*

”

“

*Previous experience, the most valuable lesson and ability to move forward was the knowledge of changing my mindset*

”

## Highlights

- 120 women responded to the survey
- 104 participants completed every question- a really positive response rate.

## About the participants and their recovery

We know that the group of participants varied hugely in age, personal circumstance, length of abstinence and their personal recovery journey. We asked questions around the participants' personal circumstances and of those responding:

- 44% were in the age range of 25 – 34 whilst 35% were 35 – 44
- 69% had caring responsibilities
- 50% have abstained from gambling for 0 – 2 months
- 64% have never had professional treatment for gambling

## What stopped participants from seeking support?

With the majority of participants never seeking professional support for their gambling, we wanted to understand better the reasons for this so we can ensure these barriers can be overcome when providing any recovery support. We understand that there can be a combination of reasons why someone may not seek support, so this question was asked in a format where participants could choose more than one reason or factor that applied to them.

- 85% of those responding said they felt too scared or ashamed to reach out for support.
- 47% said they didn't know where to look for help.
- Others felt there wasn't anywhere local, or they didn't think the treatment was going to be right for them.

“

*I felt like no one could tell me anything I don't already know deep down*

”

“

*My anxiety wouldn't allow me to join meetings or admit outside of my families*

”

“

*Initially I didn't bother looking because I thought it would cost thousands for treatment*

”

“

*I was scared to do it alone*

”

## What is important in your recovery?

Recovery is almost never as simple as 'giving up gambling'. We know from the work already completed at the Foundation that recovery looks different for everybody and what may be important to one person may not be to another. So, to ensure we are providing the right support, adaptive to every person who requires it, we asked participants what was really important to them. Participants were able to select as many options as they felt related to them:

- 83% of those responding said family life was really important to them in their recovery, closely followed by improving self-confidence, self-worth and improving health and well-being.
- But managing debt, learning new coping strategies, rebuilding relationships, resilience and support networks also scored highly.
- The lowest priority was given to employment and education.

## How should support be accessed?

With varying needs and personal circumstances, we wanted to ensure any support offered is accessible and inclusive:

- 68.5% of those responding said online support was very important to them with the majority wanting online events to take place after 6pm
- Face to face support and meeting others with lived experience was also important to some people.

## What are some of the barriers to accessing support

- Around 41% of those responding could only stay away from home for 1 night or less.
- 25% could stay away from home for up to 2 nights; 32% said they could stay for up to 3 nights.
- 38% could only attend an event away from home at the weekend. 17% couldn't attend an event away from home at all.
- 33% said they wouldn't be able to get time off work
- 31% would struggle to access support due to caring responsibilities

“  
*Having to share a room with someone I don't know would be a big barrier for me*  
”

“  
*Worried I'll lose pay*  
”

“  
*I could only attend at weekends'*  
”

## How would you feel about attending a programme with mixed sexes?

We wanted to understand from participants how they felt about attending a same sex programme. Our learnings from our 2021 pilot were that the programme had few female participants. So understanding whether a same sex environment would make women feel more comfortable in asking for support was important.

Whilst 75% of those who answered said that they would feel comfortable in a mixed sex programme, 25% of participants – of which 100% identified as female - said a same sex programme would be better for them.

## What would you like to see in a programme designed to support people in recovery from gambling harm?

### Comments included:

*I think regular check ins with the service users can help to see how far we come*

*Loneliness - I feel lonely most of the time*

*Coping strategies would be helpful and ways to help tell family/friends of what's happening*

*Programmes that encourage people to be honest about their mindsets and accept it's difficult. Programmes that challenge unconscious bias and positive habit changes*

*To help me move forward positively, learn new skills to enable myself to have a more hopeful outlook for my future*

*Wellness sessions, dealing with triggers, ways to cope, tools, hope*

*I would like to see more women being able to talk openly and honestly about their gambling addiction. Most people tend to think gambling addiction is for men. Myself being in a GA programme and celebrating my 7-year pin in March, I see a few women walk through the doors as a last resort and they are shocked to find women like themselves being in the grips of addiction so for me, we need to raise more awareness to let women know they are not alone with this addiction and that there is help out there.*

*Definitely building confidence.... I struggle making friends so that would be good.... not too intense classroom work. I have Autism and I lose focus and concentration when someone is talking too long, I'm more of a Kinesthetic learner...*



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## Our Summary Conclusions

Our needs analysis suggests that:

- There should be more support specifically designed around the needs of women. Women should be invited to contribute more often to the design and delivery of programmes that directly support them – their voices need to be heard.
- Shame and fear prevent many women from reaching out for support, and in turn leads them to attempt abstinence and recovery without the support they need.
- There needs to be more support that is readily available and accessible to women in early recovery.
- Women are most likely to want support to rebuild their self-confidence, self-esteem, and family life, but other issues such as health and well-being, rebuilding relationships and dealing with practicalities such as debt management are also important.
- Raising awareness of the support available, encouraging people to engage without feelings of shame or fear, adapting timings and formats to be as flexible as possible and building a programme specifically designed to support with self-esteem and family life are all factors that should be considered when designing support pathways for women recovering from gambling harm.

***With the feedback obtained directly from those who have suffered gambling harm, the EPIC Restart Foundation will create a pilot programme designed specifically for women and addressing their needs as told by them.***

**Stacey Goodwin**

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