

# NEWS

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## New NHS gambling addiction service for North of England launches

The new [NHS Northern Gambling Service](#) has launched – offering treatment and support to the thousands of adults struggling with gambling addiction across the North of England.

In Great Britain around 340,000 people are estimated to have a gambling problem with another two million at risk of developing one. However, fewer than three per cent of those affected currently receive treatment or support.

This new NHS service, run by Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (LYPFT), is the first NHS gambling service of its kind to launch outside London. Its first base in Leeds has now opened, and further bases in Manchester and Sunderland are set to open in early 2020. The service is being funded jointly by NHS England and GambleAware in an agreement worth around £1million a year.

The NHS Northern Gambling Service will provide care for those with severe addictions, and provide treatment and support for people with:

- additional and complex mental health conditions,
- impaired social functioning, and
- those who may present with more risk - such as a risk of suicide.

People will get support through psychological therapies, addiction treatment programmes, mental health treatment, family therapy and peer support from those whose lives have already been adversely affected by gambling. The Service can also offer separate support to family members and carers of those affected by problem gambling.

In Leeds, LYPFT is working with national charity GamCare to provide the [Leeds Community Gambling Service](#). This is a unique and enhanced service providing additional prevention, education and treatment for gambling-related harm for local residents. Supported and hosted by Leeds City Council, the service in Leeds will work across a broad network of partners including the third sector and charities.

Consultant Psychologist Matthew Gaskell is the Clinical Lead for the new NHS Northern Gambling Service. He said: “Gambling is causing serious harm to thousands of people across the UK. This includes mental health problems, serious debt, breakdown of relationships, loss of employment, crime, homelessness and sometimes suicide.

“However the chances of recovery from addictions like problem gambling can be very good with proper treatment. I often see people make good sustained recoveries if when they seek help.

“Through my work in mental health and addictions treatment over the years I’ve seen the harms that problem gambling can inflict on people. I’m proud to be involved in this much needed service. It is vital that we work together to provide a range of accessible and effective services to reduce these harms.”

Earlier this year, [NHS England announced it would be commissioning a network of new services](#) for adults and children across the country as part of commitments in the NHS Long Term Plan. This includes clinics within the NHS Northern Gambling Service (although the Northern Gambling Service will only be treating adults initially). Up to 14 new NHS clinics are being opened, starting with the one in Leeds and followed by centres in Manchester and Sunderland which are part of the same NHS Northern Gambling Service provided by LYPFT.

Matt Hancock, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, said: “Problem gambling is an addiction which ruins lives for thousands of people and their families. I am determined to do what I can to tackle it. No one’s access to support should depend on where they live, so we are expanding treatment outside of London to help addicts get the support they need to turn their lives around.

“As part of our NHS Long Term Plan, we will continue to roll out these specialist services across the country and undo the damage caused by gambling and protect our most vulnerable. This is all

possible thanks to this Government's historic commitment of £33.9bn extra taxpayers' money - the largest and longest cash settlement in the history of the NHS."

Claire Murdoch, NHS National Mental Health Director, said: "Without the right help and support, problem gambling can spiral out of control and devastate people's lives.

"New specialist services like this one, which are part of our NHS Long Term Plan, will undoubtedly make a huge difference. However tackling mental ill health caused by gambling addiction is everyone's responsibility - especially the betting giants who reap massive profits from this misery and do not do enough to prevent it in the first place."

Marc Etches, Chief Executive of GambleAware, said: "Our aim is to prevent people getting into problems with their gambling, all the while making sure that those who do develop problems receive fast and effective treatment and support.

"These new services will play a vital role in making sure those with more serious and complex needs linked to gambling will have quick access to free, fast and effective treatment, wherever they may be. We very much look forward to seeing this clinic open and we would welcome the opportunity to potentially replicate this approach in other areas of the UK in the future."

Tim Miller, Executive Director at the Gambling Commission, said: "We welcome and fully support the launch of the new NHS Northern Gambling Service. Earlier this year we launched the National Strategy to Reduce Gambling Harms, making it clear how essential it is that people across the country have easy access to support and treatment – where and when they need it. This new service helps deliver on that ambition and we look forward to continuing our close work with the NHS and other partners across the health sector."

Councillor Debra Coupar, Leeds City Council's Deputy Leader and executive member for communities, said: "Research shows that 10,000 people in Leeds are affected by problem gambling. We know that problem gambling is now a public health issue which can damage people's lives, significantly affect their health and have a huge impact on families, loved ones, and communities.

“Leeds prides itself on being a compassionate city. As a council we recognise the importance of taking a partnership approach to developing services which support vulnerable people and improve the health of the poorest the fastest. These innovative gambling support services are an important step forward in providing the support and treatment which is so desperately needed.”

## **Andy’s story - gambler turns vlogger to help others**

Andy Margett (39) from Derby started gambling when he was 13 years old. We went on to develop a serious problem, racking up debts of £45,000 by his mid-20s.

He said: “At this point I was gambling on anything and everything, and I was starting to have panic attacks. I remember gambling in the early hours of the morning with my baby on my knee, while I was giving him a night feed. I searched how to kill myself, I felt that bad. Eventually I had a lightbulb moment and smashed my computer to pieces with a hammer.”

Eventually Andy sought help and has since made a good recovery. He now has a following of over 1,100 [on You Tube](#) where he talks about his experiences to try and help others who might be suffering.

Andy welcomes the launch of the new NHS service, saying: “If I had known services like these were on my doorstep when I was at my worst, I would have felt so much better. Knowing I could have talked through my thoughts and feelings with a professional in private in many ways would have felt easier. It’s about trust – there’s so much stigma and embarrassment to get past. This service will be an excellent first port of call.”

Watch Andy’s video story in full here <https://youtu.be/uKm5ZuBwpJI>

## **What to do if people are struggling now**

If anyone needs immediate help with gambling addiction, they can:

- Contact the National Gambling Helpline on 0808 8020 133 or visit [www.gamcare.org.uk](http://www.gamcare.org.uk). Advisors can listen, provide practical information, advice and emotional support as well as referring into local treatment and signposting to specialist support services.
- Contact the NHS Northern Gambling Service on 0300 300 1490 or email: [referral.ngs@nhs.net](mailto:referral.ngs@nhs.net)

- Try and speak to their GP if they feel able.
- Find details for other forms of help and advice on the national NHS website at [www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/gambling-addiction](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/gambling-addiction).

## More about . . .

### **The NHS Northern Gambling Service**

The NHS Northern Gambling Service is run by Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and funded jointly by NHS England and GambeAware. It provides care for those with more severe addictions and also for those people with additional mental and physical health conditions, those with more impaired social functioning, and those who may present with more risk, such as a risk of suicide.

The Service will reach across the North East, North West, Yorkshire and the Humber and counties in the northern Midlands. It will adopt the approach of “every door is the right door” and work with partners across health, care and community services to make it as easy as possible for people to be referred and ensure opportunities to support people with problem gambling are not missed. This will include GPs, NHS trusts, charity and third sector partners, local authority services, Citizens Advice, debt advice groups and gambling companies which are statutorily obliged to support people with problem gambling. There will also be options for people to self-refer confidentially.

Find out more at [www.leedsandyorkpft.nhs.uk/our-services/northern-gambling-service](http://www.leedsandyorkpft.nhs.uk/our-services/northern-gambling-service)

### **The Leeds Community Gambling Service**

The Leeds Community Gambling Service is a partnership between LYPFT and national charity GamCare. It will offer an enhanced gambling support service across Leeds and the surrounding areas, working with the broad network of partners across the third sector. For more information visit [www.gamcare.org.uk/leeds](http://www.gamcare.org.uk/leeds).

### **Problem gambling in Great Britain – a report published by the Gambling Commission**

A report for the Gambling Commission called “Gambling Behaviour in Great Britain” published in 2018 showed that the number of adult problem gamblers in Great Britain was approximately

340,000 according to combined data from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders and the Problem Gambling Severity Index. [Read the report here.](#)

### **Problem Gambling in Leeds – a report by Leeds Beckett University**

Research commissioned by Leeds City Council shows that 10,000 people in Leeds are affected by problem gambling, with rates in Leeds and similar areas in the North of England likely to be twice the national average. A four-month study was published in 2016 which aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of problem gambling in Leeds. [Read the report here.](#)

### **GamCare**

GamCare is the leading provider of information, advice and support for anyone affected by problem gambling. They operate the National Gambling Helpline, provide treatment for problem gamblers and their families, create awareness about responsible gambling and treatment, and encourage an effective approach to responsible gambling within the gambling industry. Find out more at [www.gamcare.org.uk](http://www.gamcare.org.uk).

### **NHS England**

NHS England leads the National Health Service (NHS) in England. Find out more at [www.england.nhs.uk/about/](http://www.england.nhs.uk/about/).

### **GambleAware**

GambleAware is the independent charity which funds research, prevention and treatment services to help to reduce gambling harms in Great Britain. For more information visit <https://about.gambleaware.org>

### **The Gambling Commission**

The Gambling Commission licenses and regulates the people and businesses that provide gambling opportunities in Great Britain including the National Lottery. For more information visit [www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk](http://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk).

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