

Academics call for urgent establishment of NHS gambling harms services in Wales

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In an article published in [*Frontiers in Psychiatry*](#), Swansea University academics have called for NHS gambling harms services to be established in Wales, highlighting the ongoing absence of treatment

services is unacceptable and must be urgently addressed by the Welsh Government.

A team from the University's School of Psychology led the call with members of the Gambling Research, Education and Treatment (GREAT) Network Wales, outlining research showing people in Wales are as much at risk of experiencing harms from gambling as anywhere else in the UK.

The article shows an increase year on year of referrals to NHS gambling harms service clinics in England, which in 2022 stood at 1,400. To meet this high demand, there will soon be 15 clinics in England, and yet, the number of clinics open in Wales and Scotland remains zero.

Addressing the harms caused by gambling has long been acknowledged as a public health concern for Wales. Following calls for more to be done to support those experiencing gambling harms, [Public Health Wales](#) commissioned a health needs assessment (HNA) and identified challenges surrounding the awareness, accessibility, and acceptability of current gambling [treatment](#) and support provision.

Moreover, the [UK Government's Gambling White Paper](#) states that the HNA should "inform the development of specialist treatment services in Wales," echoed by the [Welsh Government's Task and Finish Group on Gambling-Related Harms](#), which proposed that it "develop a clear referral pathway and...deliver a specialist gambling treatment service for Wales."

Despite these recommendations, the wait for specialized gambling help and support services goes on.

Professor Simon Dymond of Swansea University and Director of GREAT Network Wales said, "In 2020, we showed that the need for

NHS-commissioned gambling harms services in Wales was stark. Here, we repeat our call for the Welsh Government and key stakeholders to put words into action and give the Welsh people a specialized gambling harms treatment service that meets their needs."

"The time is long overdue for Wales to be on a par with the support and treatment services available for those experiencing gambling harms in England. Indeed, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommends that people with high gambling severity should seek treatment and [support](#) from NHS-commissioned specialist gambling treatment services. Such an option is not currently available for the people of Wales."

Professor Dymond added, "We hope that the proposed introduction of a statutory levy will provide a potential means of funding this essential service, but we shouldn't wait for that to happen. We need NHS investment in [gambling](#) harms services for Wales, now."

More information: Simon Dymond et al, The ongoing need for NHS gambling harms services in Wales: time to put words into action, *Frontiers in Psychiatry* (2023). [DOI: 10.3389/fpsyt.2023.1277435](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2023.1277435)

Provided by Swansea University

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