

Anita Brock & Sonya Clark
Public Health England
Wellington House
133-155 Waterloo Road
London SE1 8UG

15 February 2019

Dear Anita and Sonya,

PHOF 2019/20

I am writing to propose that an indicator be developed in relation to problem gambling, for inclusion in the 2019/20 PHOF, or, if the timeframe is too short, then for the next iteration of the PHOF.

As noted in the Cross-Government Suicide Prevention Workplan, published in January 2019:

“Public Health England and the Local Government Association have published guidance for local authorities on tackling gambling-related harm, which encourages public health teams to consider the potential links between their work on suicide prevention and harmful gambling. Public Health England is carrying out a review of the evidence relating to the public health harms of gambling and will publish a report in 2019/20.”

Public Health England’s initiative *Every Mind Matters* notes that problem gambling can be both a symptom and a cause of mental health problems.

In the NHS Long Term Plan, published in January 2019, in the section “Stronger NHS action on health inequalities” there is a commitment:

“We will invest in expanding NHS specialist clinics to help more people with serious gambling problems. Over 400,000 people in England are problem gamblers and two million people are at risk, but current treatment only reaches a small number through one national clinic. We will therefore expand geographical coverage of NHS services for people with serious gambling problems, and work with partners to tackle the problem at source.”

As noted in the Annual Report for 2016/17 by the CMO for Wales, problem gambling rates are higher in the most deprived quartile of the population.

As these publications acknowledge, problem gambling affects the mental health of individuals and their families, and exacerbates inequalities.

To encourage local areas to follow the advice in the PHE/LGA guidance and to track the extent to which they do, we suggest the inclusion of a PHOF indicator on the number of people referred to treatment for problem gambling. This will allow the PHOF to gauge the extent to which local areas are raising awareness of the issue and developing referral routes into treatment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John McCracken', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John McCracken
Director of Commissioning (treatment services)