

26/06/06

Representation Against Manchester Regional Casino Proposal

Dear Ms Bransby

I have worked as a GP in inner Manchester for over 10 years, several of these specialising in Addiction problems.

Manchester City Council suggest that a Regional Casino project will meet the need for regeneration in East Manchester, attracting 'destination' gambling and that the high level of social deprivation locally will be alleviated.

They do not offer any evidence that the facility will not be largely used by the deprived surrounding populace, including our own patients. It is possible that deprivation will increase in consequence - although my experience as a GP is that the social costs of gambling are often well hidden.

The application points out that several casinos are already licensed in the area. Despite this, the Applicants' claim to social responsibility appears unable to state what support is currently offered to problem gamblers. If they are unable to show how current needs are met, what confidence can we have in any future provision that may be required?

Several of my GP partners share my concern at this proposal, as does our local Primary Care Mental Health Social Worker who was only able to identify one resource for problem gamblers - a single local 12 step group meeting twice weekly in the centre of Manchester!

Like many inner city areas, our Mental Health services are almost entirely focused on the needs of those with 'severe and enduring illness' - (or Psychosis) and we have long waiting lists for all forms of Psychological therapy and counselling. Our population extends near to the proposed site and undoubtedly has high levels of addictive behaviour. Manchester Council proposal's failure to recognise the deficiencies in services to meet these needs does not create confidence that it will be able to offer greater support.

My request is for the CAP to weigh these issues carefully if recommending any Regional casino in Manchester.

If this does occur it will be essential to have prior agreement from the casino to fund advice/support/treatment packages.

Yours sincerely

Mark Perry MRCGP MD MA