

## PRESS RELEASE

### GambleAware publishes evaluation of Gambling Support Service for England & Wales

- New evaluation of the Gambling Support Service in England & Wales identifies key facilitators, barriers and opportunities for programme success.
- The evaluation team found that Citizens Advice England & Wales's expertise in providing client support for sensitive issues, along with their respected role in the community, allowed them to uncover and support clients at risk of or experiencing gambling harms.
- Perceived stigma around conversations about gambling harms, and inconsistency in screening as a regular advice practice, were both found to be barriers to programme success.
- Around 30,000 people were screened for gambling harm, but there was an opportunity to improve the programme by embedding screening into regular advice and to increase awareness into the service via training and online advice content.

**London, 17 June 2021:** GambleAware has today published an independent [process and impact evaluation report](#) into the Gambling Support Service in England & Wales. The GambleAware commissioned report was completed by KantarPublic.

The Gambling Support Service in England & Wales was delivered by local Citizens Advice offices in 12 regions across the two nations between October 2018 and March 2021. The evaluation report contains details of facilitators and barriers which contributed to the success and outcomes of the service. The report also identifies opportunities to aid further future success of the programme.

One of the main facilitators identified was Citizens Advice's expertise in providing client support for sensitive issues, along with their respected role in the community. Evaluators found this meant front-line workers were well placed to successfully uncover and support clients at risk of, and experiencing gambling harms.

Around 30,000 people were screened for gambling harm, however one of the main barriers identified by the evaluation team was the consistency in screening practices across the local Citizens Advice offices. Evaluators found that a lack of flexibility in the screening questions, perceived stigma and limited capacity of front-line workers across some local offices, meant there was inconsistency in the frequency and format in which the screening questions were asked.

It was also found that active engagement and strategic involvement in the programme from CEOs and senior managers within Citizens Advice could help to encourage routine screening and

facilitate programme success. Senior involvement contributed to ‘top-down’ promotion of screening practices, which could positively affect the programme’s sustainability and longer-term impact. Furthermore, this form of engagement helped facilitate stakeholder mapping and relationship building both within local offices and outside Citizens Advice.

To overcome potential concerns and resistance around screening, the evaluation team recommended that future iterations of the programme should explore flexibility in the use of screening questions to encourage more natural conversations with clients about gambling harms as a regular advice practice. Training given to front-line workers should more thoroughly and consistently address the issue of perceived uncomfortable conversations about gambling harms, reinforced through discussions at team meetings and receiving personalised feedback. These steps would help reduce hesitancy and increase confidence among front-line workers to ask questions related to gambling harm, enabling them to identify at-risk cases.

Another opportunity for future programme development included National Citizens Advice promoting the service more widely. This would help increase awareness that Citizens Advice offers support for this issue. National Citizens Advice could also support the networking process across Citizens Advice offices and external organisations within the region to help secure buy-in and support for the programme at a local level.

With the insight provided by this evaluation, GambleAware has continued to invest in a model of delivery within Citizens Advice that takes the recommendations on board and has committed £1.8 million to the revised service between 2021-24.

**Helen Owen, Evaluation and Monitoring Director at GambleAware said:** *“This thorough evaluation has evidenced Citizens Advice’s important role in providing advice for people at risk of or experiencing gambling harm and signposting them to help. Alongside this it has helped identify the main barriers to success for the gambling support service. With this understanding we now have a clear view on what opportunities there are to improve the service. The learnings from this evaluation have contributed to the commissioning of the new process and model, at a National Citizens Advice level.”*

**Daniel Marshall, Head of Business Development at Citizens Advice, said:** *“Problem gambling can have life-changing effects, not only for those gambling, but for their family, friends and colleagues as well. It’s so important that anyone who is struggling knows they can get help and that they don’t need to deal with this alone. We are very pleased to be working with GambleAware on such an important project.”*

**-ENDS-**

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**About the Citizens Advice Gambling Support Service England & Wales**

- In 2018 GambleAware commissioned Citizens Advice England and Wales to run the Gambling Support Service, England and Wales. The programme was delivered by local Citizens Advice

offices in 12 regions across England and Wales between October 2018 and March 2021. The service aimed to:

- Promote a public health approach to the identification and treatment of gambling harm.
  - Increase awareness of gambling harm and available support among frontline service providers and vulnerable individuals.
  - Develop stronger evidence about the prevalence of gambling harms.
- The programme comprised of three main activity strands: face-to-face and online training to Citizens Advice advisers and other frontline professionals; attendance at local and national events; and support for clients, involving screening, advice and referrals for specialist treatment.
  - Each of the 12 local Citizens Advice offices operated independently across the regions. The programme was delivered by a project worker in each local office, supported by CEOs and a management structure. The breadth of project worker responsibilities was significant and there was variation in how they viewed their role and prioritised activities within the three strands.
  - The full Impact and Process Evaluation Report is available to view online [here](#).

#### **About GambleAware**

- GambleAware is an independent charity (Charity No. England & Wales 1093910, Scotland SC049433) that champions a public health approach to preventing gambling harms – see <https://www.begambleaware.org/>
- GambleAware is a commissioner of integrated prevention, education and treatment services on a national scale, with over £40 million of grant funding under active management. In partnership with gambling treatment providers, GambleAware has spent several years methodically building structures for commissioning a coherent system of brief intervention and treatment services, with clearly defined care pathways and established referral routes to and from the NHS – a National Gambling Treatment Service.
- The National Gambling Treatment Service brings together a National Gambling Helpline and a network of locally based providers across Great Britain that works with partner agencies and people with lived experience to design and deliver a system, which meets the needs of individuals. This system delivers a range of treatment services, including brief intervention, counselling (delivered either face-to-face or online), residential programmes and psychiatrist-led care.
- GambleAware produces public health campaigns including Bet Regret. A Safer Gambling Board, including representatives from Public Health England, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and GambleAware, is responsible for the design and delivery of a campaign based on best practice in public health education. The Bet Regret campaign is being funded through specific, additional donations to the charity, in line with a commitment given to the government by the broadcasting, advertising and gambling industries. See <https://about.gambleaware.org/prevention/safer-gambling-campaign/>.

