Keeping people safe from gambling harms

A briefing note

December 2021
Introduction

GambleAware is a charity that commissions evidence-informed prevention and treatment services in partnership with expert organisations and agencies. Our five-year strategy, published in April 2021, outlines four key strategic priorities and four commissioning objectives to guide our work towards a vision of a society where everyone is safe from gambling harms.

The recent pledge of £100 million from the four largest gambling companies up to 2024, together with voluntary donations from other operators, has enabled GambleAware to develop a more integrated and strategic approach to prevent gambling harm.

Despite the source of our funding, GambleAware remains a fiercely independent charity. Our services are commissioned according to evidence of need and are delivered within a robust, accountable system of governance processes and procedures that ensure the industry has no influence over any of our activity.

GambleAware continues to work in partnership with the NHS, public health agencies, local authorities and voluntary sector organisations across England, Scotland and Wales to further develop the National Gambling Treatment Service.

This briefing note summarises the issue, role of GambleAware, and the ambition of the charity’s Commissioning Strategy, with highlights of key activity that is ongoing, or in development. More detail can be found in the Organisational Strategy which is available here.
Gambling in Great Britain

Over half of all adults in Great Britain participate in gambling\(^1\) and for many, it does not cause any adverse problems. However, for some, gambling can cause negative effects on people’s health and wellbeing. GambleAware commissioned research suggests 0.7%–2.4% of adults across Great Britain are considered ‘problem gamblers’\(^2\).

The World Health Organisation (WHO) classifies gambling disorder as an addictive behaviour, whereby the pattern of gambling behaviour results in significant distress or impairment. The Annual Great Britain Treatment and Support survey found that more than one in three people with a gambling disorder do not have access to any treatment or support. Possible barriers to accessing services include a lack of awareness, social and internalised stigma, and not acknowledging experiencing gambling harm\(^3\). It is also evident that COVID-19 has only exacerbated health and social inequalities.

Approximately **350,000** (11%) 11 – 16-year-olds are reported as having spent their own money on gambling in the last week. This is lower than young people drinking alcohol (16%), but higher than those using e-cigarettes (7%), smoking tobacco cigarettes (6%) or taking illegal drugs (5%). Overall, 1.7% of 11 – 16-year-olds are classified as ‘problem gamblers’ and a further 2.7% are ‘at risk’\(^4\).

Referred to as the ‘**hidden addiction**’, the outward signs of gambling disorder often go unnoticed by family and friends, and are also largely ‘hidden’ from policymakers, health & advice professionals. Whilst alcohol and drug addiction have been recognised as public health challenges, gambling has not been included within the same lexicon.

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2. ibid
3. ibid
About GambleAware

GambleAware is the leading commissioner of prevention and treatment services for gambling harms in Great Britain. It is an independent charity guided by a Board of trustees, most of whom work in the health sector.

Our vision: A society where everyone is safe from gambling harms

Our purpose:
- To ensure gambling harms are clearly understood,
- Collaborate to deliver a whole-system approach to prevent gambling harms,
- Enable people to access the advice, support and treatment they need,
- Build and disseminate evidence-based learning and knowledge.

Our values: Independence, integrity, equality, being evidence-based

Achieving effective prevention of gambling harms and access to treatment and support is the central aim of GambleAware’s purpose and vision. The charity is guided by a framework for harm prevention through the application of a public health model based on three levels of prevention: universal, secondary and tertiary.

To effectively prevent gambling harms, GambleAware recognises a coherent and coordinated whole system approach is needed. This should involve partnerships and collaboration across a range of agencies including governments, regulators, the NHS, healthcare providers, public health organisations, local authorities, private and voluntary sector organisations.

GambleAware is also informed by evidence from research and evaluation, alongside the expertise of people with lived experience of gambling harms. Engaging with lived experience communities can help strengthen and improve existing services to reduce existing barriers and inequalities, and aid in the design and access to services as well as help prevent relapse.
Strategic priorities

To meet the challenge and successfully reduce and prevent gambling harm, GambleAware set out four key strategic priorities for the next five years, which are:

▪ **Accelerate engagement and awareness** to deliver targeted activity to raise awareness, reduce stigma and encourage engagement with information and advice, support and treatment services.

▪ **Transform capacity and capability by collaborating** with the NHS, public health agencies, local authorities, and voluntary sector organisations across England, Scotland and Wales to support growth of an integrated system of prevention provision.

▪ **Increase equity and champion diversity** to understand and address inequalities in experiences, access to services and outcomes for those experiencing gambling harms. We will take a collaborative approach working with a diversity of communities to ensure that support, services, treatment and pathways to these services are accessible and effective. The COVID-19 pandemic has also only served to deepen the existing health and social inequalities.

▪ **Deliver best-in-class commissioning** with a focus on improving processes and systems to enhance good governance, maximising transparency and value for money. We will include the voice of those with lived experience in the co-production of awareness-raising support, and treatment services.
Commissioning objectives

GambleAware has identified clear gaps in existing prevention provision. To overcome these, the charity outlined four commissioning objectives which are integral to helping prevent gambling harms:

- **CO 1**: Increase awareness and understanding of gambling harms.

- **CO 2**: Increase access to services and reduce gambling harm inequalities.

- **CO 3**: Build capacity amongst healthcare professionals, social prescribers, debt advisers, faith leaders, community services and others so they are better equipped to respond to gambling harms.

- **CO 4**: Improve accessibility and effectiveness of the National Gambling Treatment Service
Core activities

To meet these objectives, GambleAware is working to deliver more than 50 core activities. Below are some impacts and result from a selection of activities, alongside the commissioning objective they support:

CO 1: Increase awareness and understanding of gambling harms

• Results and current activity:
  o **Bet Regret campaign**: With less than 5% share of voice, the campaign reached an estimated **2.4 million** regular male online sports bettors aged 18-34, **37%** of which now try to close their app before placing a bet and **20%** say they used “Tapping Out” to cut down their gambling.
  o **National Gambling Treatment Service campaign**: Is recognised by **74%** of high-risk gamblers, **79%** of ‘affected others’ and **60%** of high-risk gamblers would contact the service as a first step.
  o **BeGambleAware brand**: 69% of the public recognise the brand.
  o **Gambling Health Alliance**: The Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) convenes around **50** professional health-related bodies, policy makers and local authorities to promote greater awareness and share perspectives about preventing gambling harms.

• Future activity in development:
  o **Women’s Safer Gambling Campaign**: to raise awareness of the early warning signs to look out for and encourage women to use the hints, tips and support provided on [www.begambleaware.org](http://www.begambleaware.org).
  o **National Gambling Treatment Service Reducing Stigma Campaign**: 19% of ‘problem gamblers’ say they would be “embarrassed or ashamed to receive treatment or support for cutting down gambling”, this campaign aims to reduce this stigma
  o **Brand tracking research**: is in development to better understand perceptions and awareness of the brand amongst key audiences.
CO 2: Increase access to services to reduce harm inequalities

- **Results and current activity:**
  - **BeGambleAware.org:** There were **5.5m** visits to the website in the 12 months to December 2021 and a **12%** increase in users.
  - **Women’s lived experience research:** GambleAware has invested **£250,000** into a new programme of research on women’s lived experiences of gambling and gambling harms.
  - **Minority groups lived experience research:** GambleAware has invested **£300,000** in a joint collaborative consortium exploring the lived experiences of minority groups around gambling harms to establish the underlying drivers causing disproportionately high burdens of gambling harms amongst these communities.
  - **Stigma Scoping Study:** is underway to identify the current **international evidence base to reduce stigma** associated with gambling harm.
CO 3: Build capacity amongst healthcare professionals, social prescribers, debt advisers, faith leaders, community services and others so they are better equipped to respond to gambling harms

- **Results and current activity:**
  - **Great Britain prevalence maps:** these three maps show regional and local inequalities in the prevalence of gambling harms as well as in usage and demand for treatment services.
  - **GB-wide Network:** Expert Link has been commissioned to design and deliver a network representative of, and accountable to, communities of people with lived experience of gambling harm.
  - **Primary care competency framework:** this summarises the skills required by medical and non-medical practitioners to ensure the provision of safe, effective, high-quality support.
  - **Banks gambling blocker:** a blueprint for the delivery of a model bank gambling blocker has been commissioned.
  - **Guide for financial services:** was published to support the sector when responding to those who are vulnerable due to gambling.
  - **Scottish Gambling Education Hub:** has been extended for three years having already trained almost 3,000 youth practitioners and reached 1,600 secondary students across 99 schools in 29 local authorities, as well as 2,500 students across 60 schools online.
  - **Citizens Advice Gambling Harms Help:** will ensure the consistent screening for gambling harms is embedded across Citizens Advice England and Wales network from 2021 to 2024.
  - **Scottish Gambling Support Service:** has trained 441 trainees and Citizens Advice Scotland has been commissioned to deliver the service going forward, to embed awareness of gambling harms.
  - **Consumer Data Research Centre:** now hosts GambleAware Treatment and Support Survey data.
  - **Six PhD studentship grants:** These have been awarded to four universities in a bid to fund institutions rather than individuals to help build a detailed knowledge of gambling harms.
  - **Surrey Prisons:** a prevention and treatment pilot in prisons to address gambling harms in the UK criminal justice system.
• **Future activity in development:**
  o **English and Welsh Gambling Education Hubs**: GambleAware is investing circa **£2.5m** in the establishment and roll out of English and Welsh Gambling Education Hubs based upon the model of the Scottish hub.
  o **Academic Research Hub**: with a **£4m** investment, the Hub will build and diversify research capability in the gambling harms field.
  o **Gambling Harms Awareness & Support Training**: GambleAware is investing **£3m** into this programme, designed for professionals working in public-facing roles, such as primary care, debt advice and the criminal justice system.
  o **Local authorities**: GambleAware continues to work with local authorities to understand support them in the delivery of effective preventions to tackle gambling harms.
CO 4: Improve accessibility and effectiveness of the National Gambling Treatment Service

- **Results and current activity:**
  - **Outcomes Framework and Delivery Model:** TPXImpact (formerly FutureGov) has been appointed to develop this framework and model to help inform the future commissioning of the National Gambling treatment Service.
  - **Special interest group:** grant funding help establish ALERTS, a group for people with lived experience of gambling harm.
  - **Peer Support Pilot:** GambleAware commissioned GamCare and Betknowmore UK to deliver the peer support pilot.
  - **Residential Treatment Programme: Adferiad Recovery** has been appointed to expand the current programme on offer.
  - **National Gambling Treatment Impact: Myriad Research** has been commissioned to undertake an analysis of National Gambling Treatment Service treatment impact.

- **Future activity in development:**
  - **Quality Assurance Framework:** this will be developed and applied across all National Gambling Treatment Service providers.
  - **Care Quality Commission:** A pilot will launch to include gambling treatment services as part of their inspection remit.
  - **Interventions:** Expansions to the range of interventions available, including early intervention and self-help will be made.
  - **Aftercare:** Investment will be made to the improvement and expansion of aftercare.
**National Gambling Treatment Service**

Between April 2020 - March 2021, **8,490** people received structured treatment from the National Gambling Treatment Service and the National Gambling Helpline handled **over 41,000** targeted calls. Of those who completed their scheduled treatment, **92%** saw a reduction to their PGSI score. Despite these strong results, fewer than **3%** of people classified as problem gamblers receive treatment. That is why GambleAware is developing a new **Outcomes Framework and Delivery Model** to help deliver improved access to, and awareness of the National Gambling Treatment Service. The Framework and Model will help inform the future design of the Service, while ensuring it remains accessible, effective, desirable and evidence-based to help more people access treatment.

**Research, data and evaluation**

GambleAware is committed to building evidence of ‘what works for whom’ at the three levels of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention of gambling harms. This informs education, early intervention, treatment and support service design, and commissioning, which contributes to knowledge generation for the wider system.

The charity is also committed to ensuring evidence-based learning and knowledge dissemination reaches those working across prevention in a range of roles and sectors. A Strategic Framework for Evaluation and an Evaluation Protocol has also been developed to create a robust framework for evaluation. These will monitor and measure the progress of interventions and build the evidence base to inform future commissioning.

Knowledge creation will also be delivered through commissioned research and evaluation portfolios, an evaluation hub, and a PhD grant programme. There will also be a comprehensive system of annual surveys and data collection to support and inform commissioning and service development at local, regional and national level.
GambleAware’s interactive maps use Treatment & Support Survey data to show the prevalence of problem gambling severity, usage of, and reported demand for, treatment and support in each local authority and ward area.

Between May and December, Research & Evaluation published 6 reports:

- An Evidence Review of Remote Intervention and Support for Gambling Harms (Responsible Gambling Council)
- Survey Methodology Review (Prof Patrick Sturgis)
- Bank Transactional Data Analysis x2 (Monzo & HSBC, Behavioural Insights Team)
- Evaluation of the Gambling Support Service (Citizens Advice) England & Wales (Kantar Public)
- Applying Behavioural Insights for Safer Gambling Tools: Part 2 Commitment Trial (Behavioural Insights Team)

Events

GambleAware hosts regular webinars, to promote our commissioned projects to our key audiences and stakeholders. In December 2021, GambleAware hosted its 9th Annual Conference, with the theme of ‘Collaboration in the Prevention of Gambling Harms’.
Governance and structure

GambleAware commissions evidence-informed services according to need within a robust and accountable system of governance processes and procedures. This ensures the industry has no influence over any of GambleAware’s commissioning decisions. Recent funding certainty has given GambleAware the opportunity to develop its new five-year strategy. The charity continues to endorse a statutory levy to ensure continued funding certainty in the future. GambleAware is guided by an independent expert board of trustees, the majority of whom work in the health sector:

**Board of trustees**

- **Kate Lampard, CBE** - Chair of Board of Trustees, lead non-executive of DHSC board
- **Saffron Cordery** - Director of Policy & Strategy and Deputy Chief Executive, NHS Providers
- **Professor Sian Griffiths, OBE** - Chair of the Global Health Committee; Associate Non-Executive of the Board of PHE; former President of UK Faculty of Public Health
- **Michelle Highman** - Chief Executive, The Money Charity
- **Rachel Pearce** - Regional Director of Commissioning, NHSE South West
- **Paul Simpson** - Chief Finance Officer & Deputy Chief Executive, Surrey & Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust
- **Baroness Hilary Armstrong** – Labour member, House of Lords; Board Member, Durham and Darlington Hospital Foundation Trust; Chair, Tony Blair Sports Foundation; and trustee, Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales
- **Marina Gibbs** – Policy Director, Ofcom’s Networks and Communications group
- **Mubin Haq** – Chief Executive, abrdn Financial Fairness Trust
- **Dr Koravangattu Valsraj** - Consultant Psychiatrist, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust; and Senior Clinical Lecturer, Kings College London
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Briefing note updated by GambleAware December 2021

About GambleAware:
GambleAware is an independent charity (Charity No. England & Wales 1093910, Scotland (SC049433)) that champions a public health approach to preventing gambling harms.

GambleAware is a commissioner of integrated prevention, education, and treatment services on a national scale, with over £56 million of funding under active management. As an independent charity, GambleAware is regulated by the Charity Commission for England and Wales, and the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). Its charitable objectives are:

a) The advancement of education aimed at preventing gambling harms for the benefit of the public in Great Britain, in particular young people and those who are most vulnerable, by carrying out research, by providing advice and information, by raising awareness, and by making grants.

b) Working to keep people in Great Britain safe from gambling harms through the application of a public health model based on three levels of prevention: primary – universal promotion of a safer environment; secondary – selective intervention for those who may be ‘at risk’; and, tertiary – direct support for those directly or in directly affected by gambling disorder, by carrying out research, by providing advice and information, by raising awareness, and by making grants for the provision of effective treatment, interventions and support.

For further information about GambleAware please contact info@gambleaware.org.