

GambleAware Organisational Strategy



Executive Summary

April 2021

Introduction

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, the majority of whom work in the health sector. This Executive Summary provides an overview of GambleAware's new Organisational Strategy for 2021-26.

As part of the new strategy GambleAware has defined its vision as **a society where people are safe from gambling harms**. We advocate for a public health approach based on three levels of harm prevention (universal, selective and indicated) delivered through a co-ordinated series of activity. This vision is based on a whole-system approach, which acknowledges the many other organisations, networks and individuals, including those who have lived experience of gambling harms, that already play a key role across the system, or that have the potential to do so in the future.

GambleAware can deliver this five-year organisational strategy due to new funding certainty following the commitment of the four largest gambling operations in Great Britain to provide £100m to the charity until 2024. The funding certainty allows the charity to take a more long-term strategic approach that reflects a shift away from separate research, education and treatment programmes to a more integrated approach addressing gambling harm. This means a programme of work that is not focused solely on grant-making and procurement of services but one that demonstrates leadership in establishing, developing, and maintaining a co-ordinated network, and to ensure future service provision consistently delivers high standards of care and good outcomes.

Despite this commitment, GambleAware continues to advocate for a mandatory levy to ensure certainty of funding beyond 2026.

Gambling in Great Britain

More than half of all adults in Great Britain participate in gambling. For many, it is a leisure activity that does not cause any adverse problems, but for some, gambling can cause negative effects on their health and wellbeing.

The World Health Organization classifies gambling disorder as an addictive behaviour, whereby the pattern of gambling behaviour results in significant distress or significant impairment in personal, educational, occupational or other areas of life. It is referred to as the 'hidden' addiction, and the outward signs can often go unnoticed to family and friends, and also health and advice professionals, until a person reaches crisis point.

Gambling harms exist in the context of often complex lives and reflect social and health inequalities. Harms are often experienced, not just by gamblers themselves, but by partners, children, parents, friends, as well as wider society. Furthermore, inequalities exist in relation to the propensity to experience harms, and in the accessibility of support and treatment. The impact of COVID-19 has only served to deepen these health and social inequalities with those who are considered 'problem gamblers' having increased their gambling during the pandemic.

Gambling treatment and prevention

Reducing gambling harms requires a prevention approach to be considered through a population health lens. This describes a way of thinking about health that includes the whole range of determinants of health and wellbeing. It can include things like civic planning or education, which are separate from traditional health services, while enabling a collective sense of responsibility across organisations and individuals.

GambleAware is working to ensure a population health approach to preventing harm is adopted in Great Britain and is guided by the framework for harm prevention, as set out in the National Strategy to Reduce Gambling Harms. This approach aligns with Department of Health and Social Care plans to transform the public health system with a more joined up system working with local authorities, the NHS and the newly created Office for Health Protection.

A clear need to strengthen and improve the existing treatment and support on offer was highlighted in GambleAware's *Treatment Needs and Gap Analysis* report. The need to develop routes into treatment and reduce existing barriers to accessing help was also identified. To achieve this, co-ordinated action is required between a range of agencies and with community members and those representing communities of people who have lived experience of gambling harms. Whilst legislation for regulation is principally a matter for government, politicians and regulatory bodies, there is a need to empower individuals with appropriate support. Specifically, a 'whole-system' approach is required, involving partnership with the NHS, public health agencies, local authorities, and the voluntary sector.

Strategic priorities

To best meet this challenge, GambleAware has set four overarching strategic priorities for the next five years:

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

Following detailed consultation, GambleAware identified gaps in universal, selective and indicated prevention. There has emerged a clear need for GambleAware, and other organisations, to work together to:

- Improve awareness that gambling carries risk.
- Reduce the stigma related to seeking help for gambling and gambling harms
- Improve the ability to identify and respond to those experiencing gambling harms.
- Reduce inequality.
- Develop an integrated, place-based, whole-system approach to treatment.

In five years, the charity anticipates the successful implementation of this strategy will ensure gaps in prevention are fewer and narrower. Ultimately, this should mean that gambling harms are better understood, fewer people are experiencing gambling harms, with those that do receiving timely and effective support, and that these changes will be sustained beyond the five-year term of this strategy.

A key measure of success will be that the National Gambling Treatment Service (NGTS) is widely understood to represent a broad coalition of services and prevention activity that is commissioned and delivered co-operatively by the NHS, public health agencies, local authorities, and voluntary sector organisations.

Commissioning objectives

To get to where GambleAware expects to be in five years, the charity must focus on delivering four commissioning objectives to be effective at helping to prevent gambling harms:

- Increase awareness and understanding of gambling harms.
- Increase access to services and reduce gambling harm inequalities.
- 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.
- Deliver effective leadership of the commissioning landscape to improve the coherence, accessibility, diversity, and effectiveness of the National Gambling Treatment Service.

To deliver these objectives, the five-year strategy lists more than 50 core activities, across research, education, and treatment to support safer gambling behaviour and provide the right support at the right time. These include new activities such as investment in the development of lived experience networks; the development of resources and toolkits to raise awareness and establish partnerships; targeted localised prevention and treatment campaigns; promoting the National Gambling Treatment Service to those who work in public-facing settings; and working with the NHS and others to implement effective referral routes and care pathways.

Building on the knowledge and expertise of those with lived experience of gambling harm will be key to help inform GambleAware's commissioning approach to ensure the charity is accountable to the very communities its commissioning activity serves.

Research, data and evaluation

Supporting the Organisation Strategy is a comprehensive Research, Data and Evaluation Strategy to build the evidence of 'what works for whom' at the three levels of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention of gambling harms. This will support and inform education and early intervention approaches, along with treatment and support service design and commissioning and contribute to knowledge generation for the wider system. As well as building evidence, GambleAware is committed to ensuring that evidence-based learning and knowledge is disseminated to colleagues working at all levels of prevention across the 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 in reducing gambling harms, and build the evidence base to inform future commissioned work.

Knowledge creation will also be delivered through a commissioned research portfolio, a commissioned evaluation portfolio, an evaluation hub, and a PhD grant programme for universities to build knowledge of

specific harms. There will also be a comprehensive system of annual surveys and data collection to support and inform service development and commissioning of activities at a local, regional and GB level.

Business and communications

Communications will be used to support the delivery of the organisation's objectives. Namely, this will be done by working to increase awareness of gambling harms and how to access treatment and support services.

A tailored approach will be applied to all communications, in particular through the differentiation of BeGambleAware and GambleAware. While the GambleAware brand will be corporate facing, BeGambleAware will continue to be promoted to consumers as a source of information for treatment and support, while encouraging those in need to seek help. This will be achieved through the delivery of campaigns such as the Safer Gambling Campaign Bet Regret and the awareness raising campaign promoting the National Gambling Treatment Service. A transparent and collaborative approach is needed to achieve impact and change, and this understanding will be reflected across all activity monitoring and reporting.

Finally, annual implementation plans will be published each year to reflect the constantly changing environment in both funding and service provision. The plans will focus on GambleAware's shared vision to increase awareness that gambling can be harmful and the understanding that gambling disorder is a recognised health condition. Going forward, plans will also reflect key treatment outcomes. Including, but not limited to, a greater proportion of people with gambling disorder receiving the right treatment and having a sustained recovery, at a rate that is comparable to other addictions and behavioural problems.

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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 £40 million of grant funding under active management.

For further information about the content of the report please contact info@gambleaware.org