

GambleAware

Self-directed tools and strategies to prevent or reduce gambling harms

Regulatory Settlement Funded
Research Programme

About GambleAware

GambleAware is the leading independent charity (Charity No. England & Wales 1093910, Scotland SC049433) and strategic commissioner of gambling harm education, prevention and treatment across Great Britain to keep people safe from gambling harms.

GambleAware commissions the National Gambling Support Network (NSGN) which provides, free confidential treatment for almost 7,000 people, as well as the National Gambling Helpline which takes around 44,000 calls a year. The charity is independent and evidence-based, with a robust governance process in place to ensure the industry has absolutely no input or influence on our work.

Gambling harms can affect anyone, not just those who gamble, but also their families and communities. These harms particularly affect communities that already face inequality.

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Introduction

The Programme

GambleAware wishes to fund research to build our understanding of informal and self-directed tools and strategies for reducing, preventing or managing gambling harms in Great Britain (GB). This programme will build on the findings from the recently published report [Self-help strategies for reducing gambling harms: Scoping study](#), which confirmed that people experiencing harms from gambling were likely to use a variety of self-guided options to reduce the harms they were experiencing, yet there is a lack of knowledge on the most effective types of strategies or modes of delivery for gambling harm reduction. Additionally, this report highlighted that there is a significant gap in the evidence regarding the **experience and preferences** of people who engage in self-directed change, particularly those from marginalised groups.¹

GambleAware is interested in building on this evidence by funding further exploration of the efficiency of self-directed tools, strategies and informal support that people experiencing gambling harms access. For this purpose, we are using the term self-directed tools and strategies to include any self-directed treatment that provides individuals with access to information and support including self-help tools, thought processes and online self-directed interventions to control or manage their own change.²³ Self-directed treatment (tools, strategies, actions) enables individuals to work at their own pace and may include little or no professional oversight.⁴ This research programme is essential to ensuring that the perspectives and needs of people who want to reduce their gambling but do not want to access formal support, particularly those who experience compounding stigma, are represented in behaviour change messaging and future treatment or prevention commissioning.

The research programme will commence after the signing of the grant agreement, and the budget envelope for the research grant is £297,900 over 18 months. As this is a research grant, it is outside the scope of VAT. We anticipate that the successful applicant/consortium will have a proven track record of undertaking research to build knowledge and understanding of strategies or interventions for reducing and preventing gambling, demonstrated experience conducting research on issues of social exclusion, stigma and discrimination as barriers faced by marginalised communities accessing services, and exemplify a specific focus on centring the agency, self-determination, and empowerment of respondents and research participants.

¹ Gambling Research Exchange Ontario (GREO). (2020). Effective Treatment and Support for Problem Gambling. Report prepared for the Gambling Commission, Birmingham, UK. [Available here.](#)

² Hodgins, D.C., Cunningham, J.A., Murray, R. *et al.* (2020) Online Self-Directed Interventions for Gambling Disorder: Randomized Controlled Trial. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 35, 635–651. [Available here.](#)

³ Kushnir, V., Godinho, A., Hodgins, D., Hendersho, C., & Cunningham, A. (2018). Self-directed gambling changes: Trajectory of problem gambling severity in absence of treatment. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 35, 1407-1421. [Available here.](#)

⁴ Dowling, N., Merkouris, S., Rodda, S., *et al.* (2018). Development and evaluation of an online gambling self-directed program: Effective integration into existing services. Melbourne: Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation. [Available here.](#)

Funding Source

This project is funded by an independent funding source, in the form of the Regulatory Settlement allocated to GambleAware by the GB Gambling Commission in accordance with its Statement of Principles for determining financial penalties. In keeping with these principles, the funding allocated by the Commission to GambleAware will be used for specific, agreed purposes that accelerate GambleAware's commissioning plans, including research projects.

Regulatory settlement funding has previously been used by the Gambling Commission to fund independent research on gambling harms. It is **not** voluntary industry funding, and the gambling industry has no influence over how it is allocated or used.

Context

Informal and self-directed tools and strategies

Only 5-12% of people experiencing harms from gambling seek formal treatment due to perceived and structural barriers⁵. Instead, self-directed strategies or tools are a common and preferred way for people experiencing gambling harms to reduce these harms⁶. Strategies identified by the precursory scoping study include, but are not limited to self-exclusion, limit setting, coping skills, cognitive strategies, personalised feedback tools, workbooks and toolkits, alongside digital strategies such as chatbots. Other strategies that may be used by people who gamble may include social support, consumption control and protective behavioural strategies, behavioural substitution and counterconditioning, urge and stimulus management, information and knowledge, problem-solving and skills development, self-monitoring and planning and goal setting.

YouGov's research, funded by GambleAware, on [audience segmentation](#), shows that only 1% of people who want to reduce or quit their gambling wish to use formal support; the remainder prefer techniques such as limit setting, substitution, or online advice to manage their gambling. Overall, this research found that people who want to reduce or quit gambling are more drawn to online tools, information, and support, along with limit setting or self-exclusion over formal support, as it is seen as more private, more autonomous, and less committed.

Digital tools and prevention

As evidenced in the self-help scoping review and YouGov's audience segmentation report, when people who experience gambling harms take action, they tend to do so primarily on their own accord. However, GambleAware would like to encourage more people to engage in self-directed strategies to reduce their harm from gambling, increase the success rate of these self-change attempts, and promote tangible actions to prevent people from experiencing further harm such as relapse. Part of this research should guide how best to engage in this space for GambleAware and other service providers. For example, the report should provide evidence about the efficacy and implementation of self-directed digital support tools or behaviour change interventions, such as GambleAware's online self-assessment tool and spend calculator, and include recommendations for how to integrate effective tools or strategies into the digital support strategy for organisations that seek to prevent harm from gambling.

⁵ Nilsson, A, K Magnusson, P Carlbring, G Andersson, and GH Gumpert (2018) The Development of an Internet-Based Treatment for Problem Gamblers and Concerned Significant Others: A Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial. Cochrane Library. [Available here.](#)

⁶ Alma Economics. (2023) 'Self-help strategies for reducing gambling harms: Scoping study'. Prepared for GambleAware. [Available here.](#)

Purpose, Aims and Focus

While there is some evidence discussing the importance and use of self-help strategies, there is a significant gap in peer-reviewed literature set in a Great Britain context. **This programme of work will investigate and address the motivations, efficacy and use of self-directed tools and strategies amongst those who experience gambling-related harms**, particularly for marginalised communities or other communities who face additional barriers to accessing treatment in GB.

The grant, with a total value of £297,900, will fund primary research involving fieldwork and data collection, with a methodology driven by understanding the experiences and perspectives of people who gamble. The researchers who are awarded this grant should remain flexible in their approach and reactive to other parallel pieces of work at GambleAware, such as those focussing on digital tools for reducing gambling harms, and prevention strategies and campaigns.

Research aims

The following research aims are driven by the recommendations of the scoping study:

1. **Quantitative and qualitative research to understand the process of self-directed change, focussing on people with lived experience of gambling harms** and learning from those who have attempted to make self-directed change, both successfully and unsuccessfully. This should result in clear recommendations of what works in informal and self-directed treatment, and for whom.
 - This should include an exploration of the optimal duration, and efficacy of design, types and delivery modes of strategies or tools to support self-directed change. This should include preliminary findings that can be sanctioned for user testing, particularly regarding digital resources.
 - Research should explore the motivators, drivers, and barriers of people who experience gambling harms, including insight into why these people choose to use self-directed tools and strategies, how to promote strategies/tools to people who are not currently engaging with any forms of self-management, and how to encourage and support long-term use for lasting change.
2. Improve understanding of informal and **self-directed tool and strategy use for groups where traditional forms of treatment may be restricted/not currently appropriate**. This will include:
 - Research into the perspectives and experiences of self-directed change within minoritised or marginalised communities, including specific population groups such as women, affected others, and those experiencing multiple or complex harms from issues such as mental health conditions, neurodiversity, or substance use disorders, etc.
 - Testing key hypotheses regarding treatment and prevention of gambling harms amongst these groups, including issues of stigma, discrimination, self-determination, anonymity, cultural competency, and other barriers/drivers.
3. Provide clear recommendations for informing prevention commissioning strategy. This will include:
 - Specific, evidence-based directive recommendations about which kinds of tools and strategies must be developed and/or invested in, including where these should fit in the gambling harm prevention landscape, and who they should be targeted towards.

- Specific recommendations for how to build up existing prevention resources commissioned or hosted by GambleAware, and how these tools should inform other ongoing campaigns, such as GambleAware's stigma campaign.
- Specific recommendations for how to best promote the recommended tools, notably through initiatives at various geographical and local scales, online, with consideration of different communities and their needs.

As guided by the recommendations of the [scoping study](#), this research should consider:

- Ensuring the proposed sample sizes reflect the purpose of the research given that the scoping review noted small sample sizes in much of the previous research as a limitation;
- Comparing self-help strategies to traditional forms of treatment (e.g., counselling), both in terms of long-term effectiveness and accessibility;
- Carrying out research within the context of Great Britain;
- Including specific research into strategies with a less comprehensive evidence base (e.g., coping skills, personalised feedback tools), and;
- Filling gaps within the current evidence base regarding which strategies or tools are unique to gambling and which do not work for gambling.

Implications for research grantees

In fulfilling the above aims, and based on existing research, will take a mixed-methods, multidisciplinary approach, incorporating qualitative, quantitative, and theoretical research, and bidders should bid as teams who can deliver the work across these areas. For examples of such an approach, see:

- [Building Knowledge of Women's Lived Experience of Gambling and Gambling Harms Across Great Britain: Final Report](#)
- [Minority Communities & Gambling Harms: Qualitative and Synthesis Report](#).

Applications from a consortium, such as a lead research organisation or academic institution working in partnership with other organisations such as digital or user experience agencies, community or third-sector organisations, are particularly encouraged.

Involvement of community and lived experience

Further to the above, research will need to include some focus on the lived experience of people impacted by gambling harms or at risk of harms, and demonstrate how lived experience will be involved throughout the project.

- Proposals should centre the meaningful involvement of community in the design, response to (as respondents, participants, and interviewees), and monitoring of research foci and fieldwork.
- People with lived experience of gambling harm must be meaningfully involved per the above, and must meaningfully participate in, and be consulted with, as part of each research programme. Proposals will need to outline the resources committed to the involvement and contribution of the lived experience community.
- This must be set out in grant proposals and will be evaluated by proposal reviewers.

Expected Outputs

The research will include qualitative and quantitative elements, framed by desk research and supported by the findings of GambleAware's commissioned published study, [Self-help strategies for reducing gambling harms: Scoping study](#).

The expected outputs from the research programme will be reports for a) a lay audience, published by GambleAware, and b) papers submitted to peer-reviewed journals for academic publication. Additionally, we encourage bidders to suggest innovative additional outputs; for example, videos, shorter assets, practitioner workshops or community events. The primary outputs should include:

- At least one synthesis lay audience report, published by GambleAware, and lay reports associated with key workstreams of the project (e.g. a report for qualitative and quantitative workstreams).
- At least two papers submitted to peer-reviewed journals for academic publication during the life course of the grant.
- An options paper for GambleAware to present potential modes of delivering recommendations.
- A slide deck for presentation of key findings and recommendations (for commissioning and policy and practice) for GambleAware and/or an external audience for virtual or face-to-face delivery. Grantees should agree to present findings to stakeholders at least two times throughout the life course of the grant.
- A variety of media/tools for dissemination (e.g. infographics, videos, poster presentations), including workshops with GambleAware and other stakeholders.

*All GambleAware reports will be in Word and will be peer-reviewed in line with GambleAware's [Research Publication Guidelines](#).

Proposal and Submission Details

Budget

The total budget for this work is up to £297,900 over 18 months. On appointment, the successful bidder will be asked to submit a detailed budget using GambleAware's Budget and Reporting Template. As a grant, this is outside the scope of VAT.

Guideline Timings

The research will be undertaken over a maximum of 18 months as agreed with grantee.

The research programme will commence at a mutually agreed date/time after the final decision and award (see below).

The guideline timings for this call for proposal are below:

Milestone	Planned start date	Planned end date
Call for Proposals launch (RFP)	29/01/24	29/01/24
Clarification of tender questions deadline	09/02/24	09/02/24
Clarification of tender answers circulated	14/02/24	16/02/24
Proposals submissions deadline	COP 29/02/24	COP 29/02/24
Outcomes communicated to bidders	11/03/24	15/03/24
Financial due diligence	11/03/24	22/03/24
Contract negotiation and signing	25/01/24	25/03/24

Proposal requirements

Please include with your proposal the following:

- A proposal of no longer than 30,000 words in total (excluding publication and contact lists). Proposals must engage with the scoping study and detail the meaningful involvement of communities with lived experience of gambling harm.
- A list of recent relevant publications by research team members and a short overview of each publication/piece of research.
- The names and contact details of two clients whom you would be content for us to contact if you are shortlisted.
- How impact and promotion of the findings and research will be maximised by your consortium further to GambleAware's own communications and promotion. This should include:
 - Ensuring longevity of the research, and this work resulting in further research.
 - How this research will strive to change the dominant and stigmatising discourses.
- GambleAware's work centres around the principles of equality, inclusion, and diversity at all levels of governance, human resources, policy, and commissioning. As part of your proposal, please set out how

equality, inclusion, and diversity play a part in your organisation. Please include any policies, procedures, and approaches to governance.

- A detailed Gantt chart outlining the proposed timeline for this research.
- Funds and resources must be made available, where relevant, to support and remunerate the meaningful involvement of lived experience communities.
- Any proposals submitted should include responses to our pass/fail eligibility criteria (see below).

Submission

Proposals and all associated documentation will need to be submitted by **5pm on 29th of February** via email to procurement@gambleaware.org with the subject title 'Self-directed strategies and tools – call for proposal' and we will acknowledge upon receipt. Any proposals submitted after this time will not be considered.

Eligibility criteria in relation to industry funding

In order to ensure and demonstrate the required levels of industry independence, applicants must ensure and demonstrate that they meet the criteria below.

If applicants are eligible, then the proposal must include confirmation and assurance that all of the criteria below have been met or will be met. Proposals that do not demonstrate having met these criteria will not be considered.

- a. Conditions for all organisations within the consortium:
 - i. Confirmation that no organisation within the consortium has any gambling industry representation on their board or senior management
 - ii. Confirmation that no organisation within the consortium has had any specific research funded or commissioned by the gambling industry in the last 12 months
 - iii. Confirmation that all organisations within the consortium will take all reasonable steps to ensure the independence, integrity and credibility of the research
- b. Conditions for the lead applicant and any other research organisation(s):
 - i. Confirmation that no research organisation in the consortium has received any direct industry funding within the last 12 months (e.g. RET donations); excluding regulatory settlement funding
- c. Where collaboration with a non-research, third-sector organisation (e.g. charity, service provider, lived experience organisation or peer support organisation) is proposed:
 - i. Justification of the choice of that partner organisation and the process through which that partner was identified
 - ii. Explanation of the relevant expertise of that partner
 - iii. Explanation of the third-sector partner's contribution to the project and how this will improve the quality, relevance and value of the research
 - iv. Itemised justification of any project funding to be allocated to the third-sector partner
 - v. Confirmation that any funding the third-sector partner may have received from industry will not influence or bias their role or contribution to the project, and how this will be ensured

- vi. Confirmation that the lead applicant (research organisation) will have sole oversight of the production of all research findings and recommendations

Evaluation criteria

Framework Evaluation Criteria	Criteria	Criteria weighting ⁷	Max Available Score
1.	Does the applicant meet the eligibility criteria in relation to industry funding, and have all the criteria for this been demonstrated or confirmed?	Pass/Fail	
2.	Proven demonstration of culturally competent research with clear examples of how the nuanced and complex needs of people in stigmatised communities have been considered in previous research.	Pass/Fail	
Quality	Innovation of proposed research, alongside understanding of the research aims, requirements and challenges.	20%	100(5 x 20)
	Demonstration of a rigorous and robust methodology, including an outline of analyses and outputs.	15%	75 (5 x 15)
	Overview of the proposed research team members, their relevant expertise and experience, and roles in delivering the programme.	15%	75 (5 x 15)
	Extent of meaningful involvement of lived experience communities throughout, with investment (financial or in-kind) allocated to this clearly set out	10%	50 (5 x 10)
	Potential societal impact of research, through regulation, policy, public debate, services or other mechanisms	15%	75 (5 x 15)
Delivery	Proven ability to meet the timetable and deliver the proposed outputs.	10%	50 (5 x 10)
Cost	Cost and value for money.	15%	75 (5 x 15)
TOTAL		100%	500

⁷ Note that any organization that does not pass evaluation criteria (1) and (2) will not be eligible for funding through this grant.

Process for appointment

The process for appointment will be:

1. Review and scoring of proposals against the above evaluation criteria by the Review Panel (made up of two internal reviewers from the GambleAware Evidence and Insights Team and one external independent Subject Matter Expert).
2. Final moderation with funding awarded to the highest scoring proposals.
3. All bidders will be notified of the outcome and offered feedback on the scoring of their proposal by the Review Panel, and the successful bidders will be awarded the grant funding.

Terms and conditions

To ensure expediency, we ask that any questions or clarifications regarding our Terms and Conditions are sent to procurement@gambleaware.org by 29 February 2024. Bidders are unable to make amendments to the Terms and Conditions post tender award. If there is no correspondence received by 29 February 2024 GambleAware will take this as acceptance to the Terms and Conditions.

[STANDARD Template Grant Agreement.pdf \(begambleaware.org\)](#)