GambleAware®

EVALUATION PROTOCOL

Prepared by GambleAware

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Approved by
Research & Evaluation Committee
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About Us

GambleAware is an independent, grant-making charity commissioning prevention and treatment services across England, Scotland and Wales in partnership with expert organisations and agencies, including the NHS, across three areas:

- Commissioning the National Gambling Treatment Service
- Producing public health campaigns on a national scale and providing practical support to local services
- Commissioning research and evaluation to improve knowledge of what works in prevention.

Regulated by the Charity Commission for England and Wales, and the Scottish Charity Regulator, GambleAware is wholly independent and has a framework agreement with the Gambling Commission to deliver the National Strategy to Reduce Gambling Harms within the context of arrangements based on voluntary donations from the gambling industry.

https://about.gambleaware.org/
https://twitter.com/GambleAware

1. Introduction

The purpose of this protocol is to ensure we have a robust framework for evaluation which builds the evidence base to inform future projects and programmes. Our intention is to produce high quality evaluations which are proportionate, undertaken at the most appropriate time and focussed on the needs of policy makers.

GambleAware is focused on generating the 'what works for whom' evidence to support and inform education and early intervention approaches and tools, and treatment & support service design and commissioning.

The research and evaluation function is how GambleAware develops knowledge that:
* Builds the evidence for education and prevention approaches and tools, and for treatment design and commissioning
* Informs advocacy and influences policy-making at national and local level
* Informs public awareness

We have a key role to play in supporting and mobilising other partners (government, academics, other research funders) to undertake research and grow the research and evaluation capability in the gambling field.

This work builds on a previous protocol undertaken in the sector
https://www.begambleaware.org/media/2093/gambleaware-evaluation-protocol-final.pdf.
It provides a framework for evaluation for the next 3-5 years which:
* Gives **GambleAware** a strategic framework for evaluation and aims to develop the capacity and capability for high quality evaluation work within the organisation
* Offers **delivery partners** clear guidance for our expectations of project and programme monitoring
* Enables **Evaluators** to undertake evaluations that are focussed and in line with a set of key principles and strategic outcomes

2. An organisational approach – Inward and outward facing evaluation

This protocol recognises the need for an organisational approach to evaluation which can be applied across all GambleAware projects and programmes.

There will be some cases where evaluation has been commissioned by an external organisation, for example the NHS or Public Health England. Although the evaluation methods may differ from those outlined here, we are committed to supporting and learning from these external evaluations.

3. The characteristics of good evaluation

We see the following three areas as the key characteristics of good evaluation:

- <u>Measures consequential change</u>: generating robust evidence that demonstrates the 'distance travelled' by the project/programme in achieving the intended outcomes.
- <u>Provides learning to inform service design</u>: producing an understanding of 'what works for whom' and informs decision making around the shape and design of both current and future gambling harm prevention programmes commissioned by GambleAware and others.
- <u>Transparent and accountable</u>: communicating the results effectively to all relevant stakeholders across the gambling and wider public health sector, sharing evidence of the impact of the intervention or wider outcomes.

Key Principles of evaluation

This checklist of principles for how GambleAware will set up and carry out evaluations is intended to ensure evaluation activity is set up in line with the organisational protocol. It includes the previous evaluation protocol. Some of these principles are generic (and would be part of any evaluation protocol). Others are specific to GambleAware.

- <u>Is robust, credible and useful</u>: using appropriate evaluation approaches to generate robust evidence, which is perceived as both credible and useful by stakeholders.
- <u>Is independent</u>: our evaluations are independently commissioned, monitored and reviewed. This ensures that they are objective and robust, producing credible results and increased stakeholder confidence.
- <u>Is underpinned by a clear logic model</u>: each project/programme we commission will be underpinned by a clear logic model which maps the logical relationship between the problem we are trying to solve, the mechanisms for change and the intended outcomes (see appendix A for a worked example).
- <u>Reflects and reinforces GambleAware's values</u>: evaluation will be undertaken in accordance with GambleAware's values demonstrating a commitment to:
  - o acting with integrity;
  - o being evidence-based;
  - o maximising impact and value for money.
- <u>Is proportionate</u>: any evaluation undertaken will be proportionate to the project(s) to be evaluated. The level of evaluation will be decided through a prioritisation/decision-making tool (see section 5. Decision Making Process) but in general the proportionality of an evaluation will be based on:
  - o The length of a project / programme
  - o The budget
  - o The strategic importance of a project/programme

- o The expected reach of the project (by this we mean the expected level of impact/number of potential beneficiaries)
  - o The level of innovation
- <u>Represents value for money:</u> any external evaluator will be commissioned in line with the GambleAware Procurement and Payment process.
- <u>Is informed by previous evaluation:</u> to ensure a cycle of constant improvement.
- <u>Represents best practice:</u> GambleAware is committed to ensuring that developments in evaluation best practice are built into this protocol over time. This protocol needs to be flexible as a result.
- <u>Uses appropriate structure and use of language:</u> it should be possible to condense findings into a short briefing
- <u>Has clear objectives:</u> the questions we seek to answer through any evaluation are clearly stated so evaluators know what we are asking them to evaluate.

4. A framework for good evaluation

While our aim is to contribute to both the wider body of evidence and to national policy, we recognise the importance of evaluating the impact of a project alongside the mechanisms used to achieve its intended outcomes. Furthermore, we recognise that changes happen during the life course of a project which sometimes require significant changes to the delivery of planned interventions. A major example of this has been the Covid-19 pandemic. Evaluations need to be designed in a way which are both appropriately flexible, and sufficiently frequent, to respond to these changes.

Evaluating impact and implementation

- <u>Evaluating impact:</u> this is about capturing evidence against outcomes, and the overall impact, to understand what difference the intervention has made. Wherever possible, we establish an evaluation framework at the beginning of a project. This serves as the basis for future evaluation and includes recommendations for the most appropriate methods for capturing evidence. A summative impact evaluation will take place at the end of a project, while a formative evaluation usually takes place at a mid-point.
- <u>Evaluating implementation:</u> this is about investigating the implementation of the project, for example how it was set up, carried out and monitored, as well as the pathways through which it was delivered. This helps us to understand what can be learned from the way the project was delivered and is a key part of generating evidence of 'what works, for whom, in what context'.

Types of evaluation

GambleAware will use a combination of the different types of evaluation listed below, informed by the principles listed above:

Process Evaluation: seeks to understand what can be learned from how the intervention was delivered. It focuses on understanding what worked well and less well, and why; what could be improved; and how the context influenced the delivery of the intervention. While for major projects, process evaluations will be conducted by independent evaluators, where proportionate GambleAware will also undertake process evaluations internally by:

- o Light-touch reviews
- o Full deep dives. These will be internal reviews commissioned by a director. These are likely to be commissioned when the organisation is concerned about the ongoing or future delivery of a project/programme
- o Internal lessons learned

- Performance Monitoring: is crucial on any project/programme and forms part of overall evaluation. It ensures that outcome evaluations can be carried out successfully. It seeks to check progress against planned targets and can be defined as the formal reporting and evidencing that spend and outputs are successfully delivered, and milestones met. It is crucial that GambleAware works closely with its delivery partners to ensure this data is available and reported on at the appropriate timescales. At GambleAware, performance monitoring means:

  - o Ensuring there are clear sets of key performance indicators (KPIs) on projects and programmes that are understood by the organisation and the delivery partner. These may be a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data dependant on the project/programme outcomes. These KPIs will be monitored at regular intervals determined on a project by project basis.
  - o Ensuring there is an effective project governance structure into which KPIs and other relevant information can be fed. This may include, regular monitoring meetings, project, steering and advisory boards.

- Impact Evaluation: seeks to understand what difference an intervention has made. Impact evaluations focus on the changes caused by an intervention; measurable achievements which either are themselves, or contribute to, the objectives of the intervention.

  GambleAware sometimes commissions foundation evaluations at the commencement of strategically important projects. Foundation evaluations aim to scope the planned impact evaluation and provide recommendations on optimal design, as well as to ensure that processes are in place (e.g. data collection methods, appropriate information sharing consents) to enable a robust summative assessment.

GambleAware will commission its impact evaluations in line with the decision-making process below, the logic model, its strategic outcomes and key principles.

5. The decision-making process for evaluation

The decision-making framework below is a tool which provides a method to help decide the type and level of evaluation a project or programme receives:

Budget & Profile	High	Large programme with significant budget and / or high profile and potentailly high impact	Level 2	Level 3	Level 3
	Medium	Medium-sized programme with moderate budget and / or high profile and expected to have sizeable impact	Level 2	Level 2	Level 3
	Low	Small budget and / or limited public interest and potentail impact	Level 1	Level 2	Level 2
Level 1 - Light touch, internal evaluation Level 2 - Consider comissioning externally with proportionate budget allocation Level 3 - Externally commissioned evaluation with budget of 1-5% of total programme recommended			Low-risk programme with low uncertainty around outcomes	Low-risk programme but some uncertainty around outcomes	Complex programme, significant risk and low certainity around expected outcomes
Budget thresholds - <100k low, 100-500k medium, >500k high			Low	Medium	High
			Risk & Uncertainty		

In addition to the above, there are two other factors which may need to be considered when deciding the level of evaluation a programme receives:

- Time: shorter projects and programmes may require lower levels of evaluation.

- Level of innovation: projects and programmes that are new, innovative or different could require greater levels of evaluation.

Appendix A

Setting SMART evaluation goals

GambleAware commissions evaluations across a wide range of Prevention and Treatment projects. These projects vary significantly and can be both complex and innovative in nature. It is therefore important to define precisely the decisions the evaluation is expected to inform as well as what evidence will be needed and why. It is essential to have clarity on the underpinning rationale for how and why the evaluation is being conducted, as well as clearly defined goals and objectives. We adopt the SMART framework as a tool to help us to define these.

SPECIFIC	• Is the evaluation clear and capable of being understood by those familiar with the context of the intervention? • Is it well defined and relevant to the rationale for the intervention?
MEASURABLE	• Is there a measurable achievement at intervention conclusion? • Will it deliver and Evidence based assessment of appropriate results through direct measures or proxy indicators?
ACHIEVABLE	• Will it provide evidence-based analysis related to the decision making needs of the intervention? • Is it capable of supporting understanding or measurement to inform judgement?
REALISTIC	• Does it establish an appropriate level resources relevant to the scale maturity and nature of the intervention?
TIMEBOUND	• Does it establish a specific timeframe for evidence gathering, analysis reporting and communications which is relevant to decision-makers' needs

Logic Model

This protocol recognises the importance of the logic model on any project, programme or intervention. A logic model is a tool that helps us to plan the implementation and evaluation of an intervention. By mapping the logical relationship between the problem we are trying to solve, our response (the intervention) and the outcome we hope to achieve, we can show how and why the intervention might work. We will ensure that there are clear logic models in place for the programmes and projects we commission, and that these will form the basis of effective and efficient evaluations.

Each logic model should include the following:
1. A clear, concise statement of the **challenge** that the programme/intervention will address
2. The **inputs** needed to put this in place and make it work
3. The **outputs** expected to be delivered
4. The **outcomes** and **impact** expected to result from the inputs and outputs- with a distinction made between what consequential changes can be expected in the short, medium and longer term

A worked example of a logic model

Programme – Work to Improve Delivery of School-Based Preventative Gambling Education

Challenge – To increase and improve the delivery of school-based preventative gambling education in order to reduce gambling harms amongst school-aged children and young people

Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact	Overall Aim
Literature review: desk-based research building on previous reviews which have identified key principles of effective practice for prevention education, to assess their likely applicability to gambling education.	**Evidence review:** Wide lens evidence scope of 'what works' in gambling education **Safe practice guidance:** for external organisations visiting schools	• An evidence base about what works in gambling education is established • Schools make informed decisions about involving external visitors in the delivery of gambling education • Primary schools are supported to deliver gambling education • Schools integrate learning about gambling across their PSHE curriculum e.g. into education about online safety, economic wellbeing, media literacy • School children can identify indicators of gambling harm and know where to go for advice and support • School children are supported to make informed decisions about gambling • Teachers deliver high quality, evidence-based gambling education through PSHE in schools	• Gambling harms amongst school children are reduced • Gambling education is embedded as a standard aspect of PSHE education • A prevention approach is promoted which develops parity with prevention of other risk behaviours e.g. smoking, drinking, drug taking.	A reduction in gambling harms amongst school-aged children and young people
Survey of teachers on current gambling education 2 teacher **focus groups** (one primary and one secondary) to explore barriers and opportunities in relation to gambling education	**Teacher research report:** research into teacher attitudes, exploring current practice and opportunities for improvement			
Researching and writing a best practice guide for PSHE teachers with four one-page briefings	**Gambling education handbook:** evidence-based guidance for teachers on the delivery of school-based gambling education			
Qualitative research in four primary schools, 2x groups in each (Y3/4 and Y5/6 pupils) Writing and testing materials	**Primary-age lesson materials:** two lesson plans and resources			
Promotion of guidance and briefings to the PSHE Association network of over 20,000 PSHE practitioners	**Podcast:** podcast on gambling education disseminated to network of over 20,000 practitioners			

For more information

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